

# LADIES OF GRÉCOURT

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Ruth Gaines





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THE HOPE OF FRANCE

# LADIES OF GRÉCOURT

*The Smith College Relief Unit  
in the Somme*

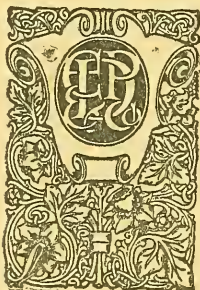
BY

RUTH GAINES

AUTHOR OF "HELPING FRANCE," ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY

ANNA MILO UPJOHN



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*“You gave us dreams unnumbered,  
And life we had not known;  
And now, O Alma Mater,  
We give you back your own.”*



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# LADIES OF GRÉCOURT



# LADIES OF GRÉCOURT

## CHAPTER I

“FOR A DREAM’S SAKE”

MY parents were born of poor parents; they were poor also when they married, about 1893, having nothing for all their fortune but their health and their hands.” In these words Laetitia Lefèvre of the hamlet of Canisy, in the Department of the Somme, begins her “*Mémoires d’une Picarde envahie pendant la grande guerre.*” \* “I was born,” she continues, “one year after, and two years later I had a tiny sister. My father worked a little on farms in summer, and in winter in a sugar factory. As for my mother, she toiled at her profession of market gardening, as her father, as her grandparents, had done. When by

\* Unpublished MS.

dint of privations and of labor, my parents had saved a little money, the idea came to Mama to work her garden for herself, and to sell for herself its produce to the extent of its capacity. So she commenced to peddle her vegetables with a wheelbarrow. But one day my father left his factory to work with her.

“Meantime my sister and I began to grow up; we went together to the only school of the little village of Canisy, where we were born; there we received a sufficiently good education, thanks to the help of a good teacher, and as soon as our parents judged that we were sufficiently educated, they took us from the school to aid them in the profession that we were to carry on. For my part, I should have preferred my studies, but a serious illness of my father’s prevented me from continuing. As for my sister, she loved the soil. Of a stronger physique than I, she was already a hard worker at the age of eleven.

“My parents had rented some land in bad condition; they bought an old horse, and an old wagon, to carry the vegetables; things

were beginning to go not so badly when my father fell ill. . . . It was with a heavy heart that I quitted my books. But I saw my mother crying, and intelligence made me understand, although I was not yet eleven, that I must care for my father as well as my mother who worked in our marshes from morning till night. How many times have I not surprised my parents asking each other with anguish if they would not be obliged to sell everything to pay for the bread that their children lacked for the morrow! . . . But at length health slowly returned; with health, vigor and courage; and Papa set himself once again more courageously to work. We were then four strong. Several years passed thus, and toward 1912 we were well installed; in 1911 my parents had bought a house both imposing and vast, our aged horse had been replaced by a young one, pretty and strong; we had also two cows. In short, the year 1914 found us in the full flower of prosperity; everything was beautiful in our gardens; we had superb vegetables, lovely fruits of all kinds, sleek cat-



"A FARM, BOTH IMPOSING AND VAST"



tle. I was then nineteen and my sister seventeen. We had saved a little money, and we could endure without fear the evil days.

“Then at a blow, oh, horror! in July, 1914, they talk of war, yes, of war. An heir to the throne of Austria has been assassinated, and the old Emperor Francis Joseph wishes to punish the assassin by arms. The assassin appears to be a Serbian, but is it possible that for one criminal war will be made upon an entire people? Oh, no, that cannot be! But alas! our papers inform us that Austria has declared war upon Serbia,—what is that little people to do against a great nation like Austria? But they say again that Russia is mobilizing, that Germany, Germany who is not to be a stranger either in the drama of Austria, is mobilizing also. And our France, what ought she to do on seeing all the preparations of the other nations? She, she too, must mobilize. But she does not believe war possible; oh, no, everything is going to come out right, and this will be nothing but a bad dream.

“Alas! it is not a dream. The third of Au-

gust, 1914, the German ambassador at Paris makes known to the French Government that a state of war exists between his country and ours. He quits Paris precipitately to cross the frontier."

The call to arms, sounded by the bells of the village churches, the resistance, the invasion, the futile flight of the villagers, the two and a half years beneath the German yoke, these occupy the succeeding pages until we come to the enforced evacuation of the civilians under entry of February, 1917:

"This time no longer any doubt that the enemy are going to quit us. But will that leave us tranquil? Oh, no! Everything has gone little by little, and to-day nothing remains to us except some pieces of furniture in the house which no doubt we shall have to let go to-morrow. For, without question, they are going to leave this land of Picardy, which they wished to make their own,—but we shall leave it too. Everything is quite ready; they can go. The French and the Allies will come; they will find nothing but ruins, since the in-

vaders in their cruelty will leave them nothing else. We are not working any more; what is the use? The men are always forced to, but we women,—they wished us to take up our potatoes out of our cellars, but we refused, so they took them themselves. This afternoon it will be the turn of the hens and rabbits which remain.

“February 15. The men have once more gone to work, but at noon the soldier who guards them says it is all over.

“At three o’clock in the afternoon, the mayor comes to notify us that we are to be evacuated this night with seventy-five citizens of Canisy, and that we must provide ourselves with a bundle to carry by hand, and with food for one day. Oh, what cruelty! We have no longer any courage. And it is without courage, and with eyes streaming with tears, that we tie up a little linen. Oh, to go, to leave everything,—for the little they have allowed us till now, we must abandon, and go, we know not whither. Every sound person goes. All the aged and the women with little children

remain. What are they going to do with them? And when we asked some soldiers who were pitying us: 'You,' they say, 'are to work; the aged, the women and the children are to be an embarrassment to the French who are coming and will encounter nothing but ruins and people incapable of doing anything for their own nourishment. For nothing will remain of your houses; they will be blown up.' Shall we then never be delivered? How long shall endure this accursed war?

'February 16. In the night, at two o'clock, we are summoned by a bell which gives the order to depart. We have no need of the bell because we have not slept. We present ourselves at headquarters, where we are subjected to being counted and requested to climb into wagons with our small luggage. On account of friendly [allied] aeroplanes overhead, we are forbidden to make any light; thus at a signal from the wagon master the wagons start slowly. There are cries and sobs from those who go and those who stay. It is the despair of parting and of not knowing whither one

goes. We pass our house, already invaded by soldiers. One last look, one last farewell, and it is the end. Poor, dear Canisy, when shall we return to thee, when and how?”

Not in one village, but in all the villages of the Oise, the Aisne and the Somme from which the enemy was preparing his retreat in the spring of 1917, the tragedies described by this peasant girl of Canisy were being enacted. fifteen hundred and eighty square miles of territory were systematically depopulated and laid waste.

During this period of pillage and evacuation, in this same month of February, 1917, the Germans, intensifying their submarine campaign, executed another of their acts of frightfulness. On Sunday, February 25, at half past ten at night, in a heavy sea, one hundred and fifty miles west of Fastnet, the passenger liner *Laconia* was torpedoed without warning. The sinking of the *Laconia*, subsequent to our severing of diplomatic relations with Germany, was the “overt act” which brought America into the war. But to Smith

College and to Canisy it held a significance of which each was unaware. In one of the thirteen boats launched from the sinking ship were Elizabeth Hoy, a graduate of Smith in the class of 1898, and her mother, returning to England from their Christmas holidays in America. The lifeboats were awash with icy water, tossed by huge waves. A passenger addressed the captain of the submarine which had risen to the surface to survey its handiwork. "Don't you know," said he, "that you are torpedoing a boat containing women and children?" "Oh, they are all right for a few hours and a patrol boat will take them all up," the Captain replied. But in the five hours before Lifeboat No. 8 was picked up, seven persons had died in it of exposure. Among them were Mrs. Hoy and her daughter.

Yet it might have been that the name of Elizabeth Hoy, "foully murdered on the high seas,"\* would have meant no more to Smith College than to the world at large, had it not

\*Cable from her brother, Austin Y. Hoy, to President Wilson.



been for the patriotism of another alumna, Mrs. Harriet Boyd Hawes. Mrs. Hawes is an archæologist by profession. Archæology is a pursuit of constructive imagination, and one should not be surprised to find in her a dreamer indeed, but one whose dreams are afire. She became a nurse in our Spanish War, in the Greek wars, and again in the Great War. It was on her return from a five months’ service in a French hospital on Corfu, in April, 1916, that—to quote her own words—she “had one week in Paris, which is to-day, I am sure, the most lovable city in the world. . . . There I saw the excellent work of the American Fund for French Wounded, and acquired some idea of the countless ways in which the French are helping their own unfortunates.” In a preceding paragraph, she had spoken of the European struggle as “a darkness lit up by the gallantry of the French and by heroic individual sacrifices among all the combatants.”\*

\* “Bad Weather in the Adriatic,” *Smith Alumnæ Quarterly*, July, 1916.

Two months after the torpedoing of the *Laconia*, in April, 1917, Mrs. Hawes spoke by invitation at an informal luncheon given by the Smith College Club of Boston. The subject matter of that speech was a complete surprise to the guests; but before the close of the luncheon, \$4,000 had been pledged for the sending of a Smith College Relief Unit to work for the women and the children—the “useless mouths”—left by the Germans in the ruins of devastated France.

What was to be the aim of this Unit and how was it to operate? Mrs. Hawes answered these questions at Commencement time before the alumnae body in dramatic words.

“Women of Smith College:

“In a very cordial letter which I received one week ago, your president, Mrs. Alice Lord Parsons, invited me to tell the Alumnae Association to-day about the plans for the Smith College Relief Unit. I have never approached a great opportunity with more serious misgiving.





A "USELESS MOUTH"

"The point of view revealed by this meeting and my point of view are very different. To you the outlook is quite bright, to me it is very dark indeed. To you the needs of the world, the needs of the College seem to be as usual; to me nothing seems as usual. The war is the only thing on the horizon. . . . Last year I did not come to Commencement; I had returned from Europe only a few weeks before and would have been as a skeleton at a feast. This year when I was asked to tell about my experiences in Europe at our class supper I could not do it. For no one can come into contact with the Great War and not be permanently saddened by it.

"In my ears the call to college women rings as clear as ever, perhaps clearer than ever before—a call of need for their steadfastness, their moderation, their good sense, their special proficiency, their *esprit de corps*, to help actively in this tremendous conflict for the right. . . .

"But if the work needs us, we most certainly need the work. What Smith College

needs more than anything else, more than any building or equipment, is a body of traditions. . . . We have one tradition of immeasurable value—you all know what it is—President Seelye; we have another mention of which I deeply regret has been dropped from our catalog. In old times the catalog began (I quote from memory), ‘Smith College is situated in a town which for more than 150 years has been noted for the culture and refinement of its inhabitants.’ But these two traditions have been made for us. We must now make for ourselves and no tradition can be better than that of united public service. . . .

“Now as to the plan. We must not be too definite. . . . We must be ready to pour ourselves into any mold of service that presents itself. . . . A final plan for civilian relief has probably not yet been formed. . . . We need at least \$30,000 for our Unit; \$10,000 for cars and other upkeep; \$10,000 for support of the Unit, \$10,000 for relief supplies. . . .

“Does the plan as I have outlined it, three or four cars, eight chauffeurs, eight social

workers, a depot of distribution in touch with the French authorities, affiliation with the American Fund for French Wounded, commend itself to you? I am sure there must be doubts, uncertainties in your minds. I beg you to state them and I will answer them to the best of my ability.

“But decide before you leave Northampton whether you want the Unit to go, for delay is the chief abomination in war-time. You have it in your hands through your own friends and special representatives to make children live and smile again, to make old people, if they cannot smile, yet take heart in response to acts of friendship from strangers in place of the cruelty strangers have meted out to them in the last two years. If you find you can help more effectively through other channels and with as great good to the College, I shall return happy to my country home, for I assure you that in offering to start this work of Smith women (and I hope other women) in France, and to leave my children for this purpose, I am as it were preparing my own execution. But

all is very well with my children, and there are other children across the sea with whom all is not well, all is horribly wrong, and their lives also are precious in the sight of God.”

## CHAPTER II

### OVERSEAS

ON the twelfth of August, 1917, the *Rochambeau*, as she had done practically every month since the beginning of the war, dropped anchor at the base of the white lighthouse that guards the entrance to the Garonne. Her voyage had been uneventful; her red-capped gunners at prow and stern had watched the gymnastic drills of the Smith College Relief Unit with as much attention as the unvexed expanse of the sea. Even the moon had lighted us without treachery to our haven. As we voyaged the following morning up the river to Bordeaux, no scene could have been more peaceful. Red-winged fishing smacks, outward bound, golden harvests fringing the shores, trellised vineyards, silver poplars, medieval hill towns,—all washed in a haze which was yet tenacious enough to carry, motionless,

its stately galleons of clouds. Remote from war as an old print, or a reverie of summer, was the Garonne.

To the Unit, fresh from an official farewell where they had been likened to the heroic women of all time, and dedicated to a solemn college tradition, Bordeaux came as an anticlimax and a delight. Responsibilities, anxieties,—what are they to youth but the stuff of which adventure is made? Our seventeen members were gathered from fourteen classes, ranging from 1888 to 1914, but though the years had made of some of us archæologists, doctors, teachers and social workers, we were all volunteers. To the cheers of fellow volunteers of the American Ambulance and the American Engineers, we disembarked.

At Bordeaux we were heavily loaded, having brought with us in trunks, duffles and boxes as much of our equipment as possible. This included camp beds, blankets, carpenter's tools, food, automobile parts and clothing for distribution. There had previously been forwarded by freight three automobiles '(one



White truck, one Ford truck and one Ford jitney), six portable houses and stoves for the same. These had all arrived safely in France,—a most fortunate circumstance, putting us at once on an independent, self-supporting basis. With money, housing, supplies and transportation—above all transportation—we could hope to be of use.

In Paris, we were made welcome at the Headquarters of the American Fund for French Wounded. The French Government, through them, had already assigned us a post in the devastated area, an advance post, as such assignments went among women's units, fifteen miles behind the front line trenches in the Somme. Famous for centuries in the annals of Picardy, its name was in itself a tradition and a challenge: Château Robécourt, Grécourt. Upon it depended for relief—as in feudal times had depended for defense—sixteen outlying villages.

But although our sector was only seventy-five miles from Paris, it took a month of effort to get the Unit there. In the first place,



there were stringent war-time regulations. Our arrival, residence, ancestry, attributes, intentions and photographs had to be registered with the Prefecture in Paris. In return for this information we received in due course a permit of residence. We also registered ourselves with much more circumstance, sponsored by Mrs. Dike and Miss Morgan of the Civilian Section of the American Fund for French Wounded, at the Ministry of War. Thence through the Third French Army to which we were to be assigned came also in time permits of travel and of circulation, both by train and automobile, to, from and in our villages. A third set of permits must be secured for our chauffeurs, and a fourth for our cars themselves, to entitle us to the use of gasoline. For the transportation of freight another special permit was reserved.

Meantime neither freight nor cars had come through from the seaport of St. Nazaire to Paris. The docks were choked with American Army supplies, the railroads taxed beyond capacity in hurrying men and ammunition to a

front which extended in a vast semicircle from the pivot of Verdun. About Ypres was raging in those summer days the Battle of Flanders; from Verdun itself was being launched the successful offensive which recovered to the French Mort-Homme and Hill 304, "the key to the eastern front." Our headquarters on the Quai Voltaire shook often with troop trains passing underground to the Quai d'Orsay Station; the staccato of cavalry, magnified by the sounding board of the Seine, disturbed our midnights; avions even then started out of the northern sky to course like stars among the constellations; convoys, soup-kitchens, rumbling artillery defiled eastward or westward in dimly seen lines.

But of all this we were aware only at night. The Director and Assistant Director of the Unit found their days taken up with interviews and consultations. The Executive Committee of five scoured war-time Paris for additional supplies and merchandise. Hampers of Quimper ware for our own table, *batteries de cuisine*, lumber, sabots, galoshes, felt slip-

pers, felt shoes with or without leather soles, wrappers, skirts, underwear, cloaks, capes, mufflers, kerchiefs, caps, sheets, blankets, sewing machines, wool, soap, toys, farm implements and books, began to fill our store-room at the hotel. Larger consignments were sent direct to the depot of army transport, detailed for civilian relief, which undertook to deliver them at the Château. We also purchased through an agent our first livestock, consisting of six cows, three pigs, poultry and rabbits, all to be shipped direct from Brittany to the Somme.

The residue of the Unit occupied itself in nursing, making surgical dressings, splints and special shoes for the wounded, pillows for hospital trains, and in packing or unpacking cases of supplies at the ware-rooms of the American Fund. We had ceased to be spectators. Like all the world around us, the tentacles of the War had sucked us in.

Meantime, our Director had been taken by the American Fund for French Wounded on a tour of inspection to our ruined estates. She

came back brimming with an enthusiasm which admitted no further obstacle. On the night of August thirty-first, she and five chauffeurs boarded a train for St. Nazaire, where our automobiles and our houses were still held. "Our property," she wrote later, "was found on a quay, on a freight car, and stacked in the freight yard. To get the cases together, unship and put together the cars, haul them to the garage and get them in running condition, took four days' very hard work." But three days later, we saw the cars draw up before our hotel in Paris. At last we were ready to start for the front.

## CHAPTER III

### CHÂTEAU ROBÉCOURT

THE ancient signorial fief of Grécourt, consisting of an old Château with its enclosure of about six hectares, and of seventeen hectares of tillable land," owed allegiance in feudal times to the Marquisate of Nesle. It dates, we read, only from the eleventh century. It never had a chart of enfranchisement as a commune, but it was formed into a parish, with its own church, its priest and its tithes, on St. Matthew's Day, the twenty-first of September, 1239.

In September, 1917, its present chatelaine, the Baronne de Robécourt, transferred, for the time being, its "precarious title" to us. "Madame," she wrote to the Director of the Unit, "I am so happy that what remains of my Château of Robécourt, which I love so much, should be under your protection. That

consoles me a little for the great sorrow I feel in seeing it as good as ruined by those Barbarians. I admire so much the good you are doing in coming to the help of this Poor Country and of its unhappy inhabitants. . . . Please accept, Madame, the assurance of my distinguished consideration. Baronne de Robécourt."

In those feudal days, when our tiny estate was itself the seat of civil strife between the rival houses of Robécourt and of Grécourt, the approach to it was not more adventurous than ours during the Great War. The Wood of Clovis, the Ford of the Wolves, the Field of Battle, the Captain's Close,—these names of medieval encounter could be pointed out in our day as the sites of German batteries, of dynamited bridges, of encampments and aerodromes. Nor was any feudal seneschal summoned from his sleep more glad to let down the drawbridge for his overlord than Marie, the faithful concierge of the Baroness, to open the gates on our arrival to us. It made no difference that the hour was nearly midnight.

Coffee must be served. And the villagers of Grécourt, numbering twenty-five women and three little children, came from their shelters in the stables to bid us welcome to our home.

The start from Paris had been made that



"DYNAMITED BRIDGES"

morning with the cars all loaded to capacity and carrying six pioneer members of the Unit. The road lay through Chantilly, Senlis, the lovely Forest of Compiègne, and from Compiègne itself up the valley of the Oise to Noyon. Camions, marching regiments, aeroplanes overhead, gave a warlike aspect to the



military highway that stretched northward, hard and fit, beneath its arcade of elms. So, two thousand years ago, ran Cæsar's road linking Amiens to Rome. But the unbroken forests of that day had given place to rolling harvests brightened by poppies and to terracotta villages embowered in orchards and the smoke of burning leaves. At intervals, blue uniformed sentries stepped out to halt the cars, demanding safe conducts. Near Noyon, the ravages of combat became evident. We saw for the first time a trench, a dugout, trees shredded by bombardment, wire entanglements, wooden crosses brave with the tricolor, the empty shells of villages gaping like skulls.

Our party drew into Noyon in good order, and halted in the square before the as yet undestroyed, beautiful Hôtel de Ville. There the first accident befell us. One of the cars refused to proceed. The French army, which we were soon to know so well, came to the rescue. At dusk the Unit was once more under way, headed by a military camion to which the load of the crippled car had been transferred.



Although the twilights linger above the plain of Picardy, darkness overtook us, and each crossroad, so plainly marked in day time with enormous lettering, had to be deciphered with a lantern. In all the silent stretch of country, there was no friendly lighted village where one might stop at a tavern to inquire the way. Here and there was a huddle of ruins, or a bivouac, or a wood, doubly dark, but for the most part only the vague plain, the myriad stars and the thread of the road between. So the Unit came to Grécourt.

It camped that night on blankets on the floors of the new *baraques* the Army had already erected for it. With the first light, it was up and out for a survey. The *baraques* themselves, three in a row, were placed on the edge of a little meadow which had formerly been a semi-circular lawn. On the east, the ruined esplanade of the Château led down to it. As one climbed over the *débris* of fallen walls into the unroofed interior, one looked through the frame of an ample doorway across this greensward to a broken sundial, from

which radiated the alleys of the wood. It was a noble wood of oak and chestnut and dappled plane trees, and even after the leaves fell, perennially green with ivy and mistletoe. But it had been shamefully used by its German conquerors. *Corvées* of Russian prisoners had felled and laid waste until half of it was reduced to scrub. Here and there in the undergrowth were prone trunks of giant oaks sawed in sections, ready to be exported to Germany.

The avenue of cypresses and poplars leading from the road to the Château gate had suffered more, because more senselessly, from German vandalism. Half the trees were down and laid symmetrically away from the thoroughfare. Even the poplars along the footpath from the Calvary to the tiny church had been lopped. As for the village itself, only the church was standing, and the remnant of its inhabitants were wondering where they could go next, since they had been ordered by the Army to vacate their quarters in the stables to us.

On this point, we reassured them. We had

for housing the three baraques, each of two rooms, already mentioned, six portable houses



"ONLY THE CHURCH WAS STANDING"

in prospect, an *orangerie* of some forty by twenty feet with a good roof, albeit the glass of its great windows lay shivered to atoms, a

small room with a door and a window almost intact built beside a greenhouse, and two doorless cells in the greenhouse itself,—relics of the luxurious baths which the German officers had installed therein. We had also the cellar of the Château. The greenhouse was a skeleton of twisted iron. The cellar seeped from tons of wet débris above; the explosion which had wrecked the Château had laid bare almost an entire side, the ceiling was shored up, and all the dark interior was fitted with rough chicken-wire bunks and filled with straw. For even in its ruins, the Château was listed on military maps as capable of housing two hundred men.

As we regarded the devastation within our own gates, we saw for ourselves the purpose of the enemy. Mile after mile, village after village, the engineering corps of the retreating army had prepared this reception for the victorious pursuers; ruins in which they must shelter themselves as best they could from the rains of summer and the snows of winter, which they must share with a civilian population, homeless and starving.

A squad of soldiers, loaned by the Army, was soon at work cleaning and repairing for us. The windows of the orangerie were covered with oiled paper and it became dispensary, garage, carpenter shop, gymnastic hall and general assembly place until other room was provided. The cellar was cleared and whitewashed. Here were installed our dairy, our pantry and our supplies of all kinds. The problem of a kitchen was solved in those early days by Marie, who had a range still in working order in the hut she had built into the ruins of the lodge. She had been forced to cook for the Germans; she cooked for us. Maurice, her sixteen-year-old son, heated water in a huge cauldron for our morning use. From the nearest village, about a mile away, came each day Zélie, our kitchen maid, Mme. Nogent who washed for us under superhuman difficulties, Mme. Topin who sawed and chopped our wood, and Léandre, the boy who herded our cows. Grécourt itself furnished that most faithful helper of all our household (for Marie belonged not to Grécourt, but to

the Château), Mme. Pottier. A typical Picarde, broad in humor, familiar, brusque, but dependable even should the heavens fall—ready, as her ancestors have it in one of their proverbs, to receive them on her pike—such was Marie Pottier, our milkmaid, factotum and friend.

But it was long before our portable houses were up, or our own quarters ready for the winter—in fact, they never were ready—that we welcomed the dependents whom the French Government and the Baronne de Robécourt had so trustingly confided to us, to the hospitality of our domain. On the twenty-first of September came round the fête of St. Matthew, for seven centuries the patron of Grécourt. It was not the least part of our good fortune that we could make its celebration our first official act.

The curés of the entire countryside having been called to the colors or taken as hostages by the Germans, their places in the churches were filled by the devoted chaplains of the French army of whom the world has heard so



much. Privates in the ranks, pausing in the attack only to administer the sacrament to the dying, nurses, or Red Cross stretcher bearers, they added to their duties the spiritual care of the civilians in the forlorn villages where their regiments might be billeted on leave. One of these promised to come from Nesle for the mass.

The service had been advertised in all our sixteen villages by the Unit which, accompanying the doctors on their rounds, sang the hymns chosen for the occasion in the deserted streets. But the villagers themselves cut the rank-grown weeds in the cemetery and trimmed the interior of the church with autumn leaves and flowers. The day was clear. The roads were dry. And from every quarter, from every shack and hovel, the country people walked to Grécourt. They filled the little church, and overflowed into the quiet churchyard. It was to be the first mass in three years!

Soon the chaplain arrived in his soldier blue. Over it he slipped his vestments, ar-

ranged the symbols of the Faith upon the altar, and began the invocation. No eyes were dry in that audience; the prayer books, saved among the few treasures in the confusion of flight, were blurred from sight. But lips moved in unison to well remembered words. The hymns, the responses, offered by the quavering voices of women and children, opposed the sound of cannon not far distant toward St. Quentin. "Ils ne l'auront, jamais, jamais, ce pays des prieux, notre France," they sang triumphant, and then, as if beseeching for husbands, sons and brothers out yonder: "Sauvez, sauvez la France au nom du Sacré Cœur!"



## CHAPTER IV

### NEIGHBORS

**A**MONG the neighbors who came to the Fête of St. Matthew was M. le Commandant Monin, in charge of our sector, with headquarters at Guiscard. To him we owed already our baraques, our water supply, our squad of soldiers, and the orders which had gone to every officer throughout the Zone to respect and aid "*les dames Américaines*" attached to their own army, the Third Army of France. His heart was quite won by the service. "You have begun right," he exclaimed. "Your doctors care for the sick bodies, and you who are Protestants"—this seemed to astonish him most—"have now taken thought for their souls." Thenceforth, there seemed to be no courtesy, great or small, which the Commandant did not delight to show us. Having called one day and found us without fires because we had no wood, he sent over a camion load. The

Germans in the prison camps were set to work to make us tables and bureaux. At Christmas time eight hundred francs found their way to us from his purse, to be expended "just for foolishness." They gladdened many a child with candy and toys.

But the extent of our dependencies, covering thirty-six square miles, gave us at Ham, the advantage of another Commandant of like kindly heart, M. le Commandant Moret. Fortunate it was for us that our immediate superiors in the Army were thus well disposed. We profited, of course, from the prestige of our sponsors, the American Fund for French Wounded. By them we had been accredited to Captain Pallain who was in charge of the service of reconstruction of the Third French Army. This was a branch of the army as definitely organized as any other. To offset the German corps of destruction, were created French corps of reconstruction. A statistical survey of the devastated area reclaimed in the spring of 1917 was one of its first cares, and was intended to serve a double purpose: to

acquaint the army of occupation with its resources, and to form the first-hand testimony on which should rest demands for indemnity. It is a commentary on the good faith with which the Army received us that the military map of our own sector was entrusted to us.

The French army found, as the enemy had intended, its ruins encumbered by human beings literally without food, clothing or shelter, suffering from long slavery and from the shock of recent bereavement. It did not need to take the testimony of the inhabitants to establish these facts; the very stones of the ruins rose up to testify. For example, near us in the twenty-five communes of the Kommandantur of Holnon was posted the following proclamation:

“Holnon, le 20 Juillet 1915.

“Tous les ouvriers et les femmes et les enfants de quinze ans sont obligés de faire travaux des champs tous les jours, aussi dimanche de quatre heures du matin jusqu’ à huit heures du soir (temps français).

“Récration, une demi-heure au matin, une heure à midi et une demi-heure après-midi.

“La contravention sera punie à la manière suivante:

“1° Les fainéants ouvriers seront combinés pendant la récolte en compagnie des ouvriers dans une caserne sous inspection de caporaux allemands. Après la récolte les fainéants seront emprisonnés 6 mois; le troisième jour la nourriture sera seulement du pain et de l’eau.

“2° Les femmes fainéantes seront exilées à Holnon pour travailler.

“3° Après la récolte, les femmes seront emprisonnées six mois.

“Les enfants fainéants seront punis de coups de bâtons.

“De plus, le Commandant se réserve de punir les fainéants ouvriers de 20 coups de bâtons de tous les jours.

“Les ouvriers de la commune de Vendelles sont punis sévèrement.

“Afficher

GLOSS

Colonel et Commandant.”

Toward these inhabitants the army of deliverance at once assumed the responsibilities of government. Food was hurried in; private charities were facilitated in large distributions of clothing and household necessities; details of soldiers under military architects began to repair the ruins or to erect temporary houses; military doctors took over the care of public health, military labor cleared and leveled and plowed the battlefields. Everywhere a quota of army transportation, by rail and by camion, was allotted to civilian needs. For the needs of the civilians were identical with the needs of the army: housing and food. Before the war, a fourth of the wheat of France had grown in the northern departments; it was essential that this harvest grow again.

Closely following the army came the civilian authorities. All of our villages lay in the *arrondissement* of Péronne. We therefore fell under the jurisdiction of the *Sous-préfet* at Péronne, and through him under that of the *Préfet* at the capital of the Department, Amiens. But a *liaison* officer between the

civil and the military masters of government was essential. For instance, the sous-préfet of St. Quentin, which together with one-tenth of the territory of the Department was still in the hands of the enemy, was carrying on his administration at Ham. Army sectors cut into the ancient alignments of communes, army orders superseded civil law. Amiens itself, so far as military law was concerned, was under British rule.

To meet the complexities of the hour, a special representative of the Ministry of the Interior was sent to each of the departments reclaimed by the spring drive of 1917. Fortunately for us, the special sous-préfet of the Somme, as he was styled, had his headquarters only five miles from us at Nesle. More fortunately, he was an able, brave and public spirited gentleman. Upon M. Quellien devolved among other duties the coördination of relief.

As early as December, 1914, the Government, then sitting in Bordeaux, had allotted pensions to the civilian victims of the invasion.



"A CHARACTER . . . UNSHAKABLE"



The declaration made by the Government to the Senate and the Chamber, advocating this measure, contains these words:

“It will not suffice us to salute the victims fallen on the field of battle. We should uncover ourselves also before those victims, non-combatant, innocent, whom up till now the laws of war have protected, and whom, in an attempt to terrify a character which has remained and will remain unshakable, the enemy has captured or massacred. . . . France will right these ruins, counting surely upon the payment of the indemnities which we shall demand, and meantime upon the aid of contributions which the nation as a whole will pay, proud amid the distress of one part of its children, to fulfill the obligation of its common responsibility. So, repudiating the form of charity, which implies condescension, the State proclaims on her part the duty of reparation in favor of those who have been the victims in their property of acts of war, and it will fulfill its duty to the furthest limits that the financial capacity of the country will permit.”



So it was that every month the families of our villages went to Ham or to Nesle, to collect their *allocation*, or to the mayors to register claims against their future "*Indemnité de Guerre*." The former supplied the equivalent of bare living, the latter was good on paper for stores of furniture, or agricultural implements, or temporary houses held by the special sous-préfet in his warehouses in Nesle. But transportation was inadequate. The long anticipated allied offensive toward St. Quentin, with its massing of troops and of ammunition, the Italian reverses which sent its hundreds of thousands storming in the opposite direction, the taking over of our lines by the British and the withdrawal of the French,—among these events the wonder is that any civilian supplies came through.

It was chiefly to supplement supplies and transport that private agencies had been invited by the Government to coöperate with it in the devastated areas. In our own vicinity there were already five societies at work: the Secours d'Urgence at Roye, the Union des

Femmes de France at Nesle and at Ham, the French War Emergency Fund, known as the Œuvre Anglaise, at Nesle, the Friends and the American Red Cross. All of these like ourselves had their sectors assigned in the first instance by the Army, and continued to work by favor of safe conducts and permits renewed by Captain Pallain at frequent intervals. We were also answerable to M. Quelien, who called the directors together for monthly conferences and required of us monthly reports. M. Vernes, the representative of the Union des Femmes de France at Nesle, was the presiding officer of these conferences. He and Mme. Vernes are typical of the comparatively little known war workers of France. Far beyond military age himself, his two sons were with the colors; one of them had been killed. His factories had been destroyed. He was one of the agents sent by the Government on its first tour of inspection after the German retreat of 1917. He came up through Noyon, Chaulnes, Roye, Nesle,

Ham and Guiscard, and he came back to live in the ruins of Nesle with his wife.

Each of the relief societies, except the Friends and the American Red Cross, had a definite number of villages in its charge, so that there was no overlapping. In its assigned area, each worked out for itself its system of relief. All were on the same footing in one respect; none attempted actual reconstruction, but relied upon army shelters and army repairs, supplying, however, tarred paper, glass and glass substitutes and limited quantities of lumber to such as could use them. Thus sometimes a soldier returning home on permission repaired a roof, or set a pane of glass in the otherwise dark room where his wife or his mother had taken refuge.

But the American Red Cross and the Friends had a building program in two neighboring groups of villages, and in addition the latter came into two of our villages, Hombleux and Esmerly-Hallon, to set up Government baraqucs. The chief function of the

American Red Cross, however, was the accumulating in warehouses and the distributing to all relief agencies of large stores of supplies. Two of these warehouses were located in our district, one at Ham and one at Nesle. It was in November that the stores began to arrive, and it was a red letter day for the Smith Unit when Mr. W. B. Jackson, the Red Cross delegate, convoyed the first camion load of hundreds of sheets and blankets to the Château. For between the time of our arrival in France and that event, practically all the relief supplies of America had been pooled by the Red Cross in one vast reservoir, from which it undertook distribution to all accredited relief agencies throughout the world. This momentous policy diverted special donations from designated objects, but on the other hand it opened enormous resources. If we did not get the boxes of clothing packed and addressed to us by enthusiastic college clubs, we received from the Red Cross in their stead money, pumps, plows, medicines: in short every requisition that could be honored by the Paris head-

quarters, and transportation and wholesale allotments from the local warehouses. More than that, we have had from that day to this, the invaluable counsel and support of Mr. Jackson, now Major Jackson, Director of the Field Service of the American Red Cross in France. A man who graced his position with knowledge and courage, it is such as he who have made the good name of the American Red Cross.

We had other neighbors as well, our own boys. There were the Eleventh American Engineers, building railroads for the British at Le Catelet, aviators attached to the French scouting escadrille in our rear and the drivers of the American Ambulance to be met on almost any road. There were the Canadian Foresters in a moated old Château toward Noyon, British officers, French infantry, artillery and blue devils billeted in our villages, newspaper reporters who astonished us by dropping in to tea on their way to and from the front, and finally, as curiosity grew, celebrities like Gaston Deschamps and Coningsby

Dawson, who have given the Smith College Unit a place in their books on the war. Each and all contributed something tangible to our happiness, from the Ambulance boy who walked one December day from Albert and back again, to bring us his allowance of sugar, to the foresters who saw to it that wood was not lacking for our fires, nor stoves to burn it in. Even in the days of "before the war," when Mme. la Baronne's picture galleries and dinners and hunting parties were the talk of the countryside, Château Robécourt never entertained more hospitably than in its ruins under its American chatelaines.

## CHAPTER V

### “LADIES OF GRÉCOURT”

**T**HE military map given to the Unit by the Army bore this legend: “Secteur Somme Est, Cartographie 72, 10 Août, 1917. Territoires Reconquis. État des Localités. Population et Capacités des Cantonnements à la date du 10 Août, 1917.”

Our own villages are thus listed:

	Capacity	Population
1 Bacquencourt . . . men	300 (Belongs to commune of Hombleux)	
2 Breuil . . . . . men	1,000	inhabitants .. 15
	horses 350	population .. 150
3 Buverchy . . . . . m.	200	inhab. . . . . 25
	h. 100	pop. . . . . 101
4 Douilly . . . . . m.	450	inhab. . . . . 18
	h. 650	pop. . . . . 582
5 Eppeville . . . . . m.	1,100	inhab. . . . . 500
	h. 200	pop. . . . . 914
6 Esmery-Hallon . m.	1,500	inhab. . . . . 265
	h. 400	pop. . . . . 1,029
7 Grécourt . . . . . m.	200	inhab. . . . . 15
	h. 50	pop. . . . . 63
8 Muille-Villette .. m.	800	inhab. . . . . 46
	h. 100	pop. . . . . 379



Capacity		Population	
9	Villette . . . . . m.	150	(Belongs to commune
	h.	120	of Muille-Villette)
10	Canisy . . . . . m.	400	(Belongs to commune
	h.	150	of Hombleux)
11	Aubigny } . . . . . m.	900	inhab. . . . . 282
12	Brouchy } . . . . . h.	780	pop. . . . . 559
13	Offoy . . . . . m.	1,400	inhab. . . . . 135
	h.	450	pop. . . . . 393
14	Sancourt . . . . . m.	150	inhab. . . . . 26
	h.	80	pop. . . . . 389
15	Verlaines . . . . . m.	150	(Belongs to commune
	h.	60	of Eppeville)
16	Hombleux . . . . . m.	450	inhab. . . . . 383
	h.	350	pop. . . . . 1,021

Taking this map as our guide, we set forth to investigate our ruins. Delays in the arrival of our relief supplies, distressing in themselves,—for there was no need of investigation to demonstrate the needs of the community—gave us time to become acquainted with the inhabitants. Our two doctors, who refused to be discouraged by their lack of medicines, led the way in making house-to-house visits. Both spoken fluent French; in fact, Dr. Kelly, who was not an alumna of the College, was brought up and educated in France. The head of the social service department, herself a refugee from Belgium, in the summer of 1914, was



also in a position to understand from experience the misfortunes of the villagers.

The map gives the conditions in epitome. Comparing the population of before and after the War, one sees that out of 5,580 inhabitants, there were left in our villages in August, 1917, 1,740. These consisted, as has been said, of the old, the feeble and the children. Of these latter, we learned later, there were about six hundred under fifteen years of age. The figures again form an accurate gauge of the amount of destruction in each village. Take Breuil for example. The population is given as 150, the inhabitants as 15. One tenth, then, of its former citizens existed in the ruins. And yet in these ruins were quartered nearly ten times the normal civilian population, soldiers who swarmed in half demolished barns or in the enclosure of the dynamited Château. Destitution, overcrowding, insanitation, these are the familiar catchwords of social service everywhere.

But what a background! In Breuil, the ruins were complete. On each lintel still

standing may be seen to this day the circles and the crosses chalked there by the Prussians, the circle being the order to poison the wells, the cross to burn the buildings. The orders were carried out. In addition, Breuil, situated in the marshes encompassing Nesle, became a strategic point in its assault. Church, school, Château, houses, nothing but a jagged mass of bricks was left to mark its site. Buvérchy, its neighbor to the south, is given on the map as having had a population of 101. Twenty-five, or one fourth only of its inhabitants, remained. Its ruins tell the story of the conflict that raged on the former highroad from Nesle to Noyon for the possession of the bridge just beyond the village church over the Canal du Nord. Only one house was left practically undamaged, that of an alleged German spy.

At the other extremity of our domains, high up on the hills that look toward St. Quentin, stood Douilly. Its population of 582 souls had been reduced to 18. On that August day when the census was taken, the fields about

it were red with poppies, as in March, 1917, they had been red with blood. The summit of



"A VILLAGE OF LARGE PROPERTIES"

the hill was crowned with a gaunt chimney or two, indicating former distilleries of sugar beets; the great farms—for Douilly was a vil-

lage of large properties—gaped in empty quadrangles. Wherever shelter above ground was to be had, it was given over to artillery and cavalry; the remnant of the population, as their ancestors had done in many another war, lived underground. Here and there along the village street a cellar-way and a length of smoking stove pipe marked their retreat. Sancourt, our other hill town beyond Ham, had also suffered severely, though here the old church proudly faced the eastern front. Eppeville, Muille-Villette, Canisy, Esmery-Hallon, Grécourt, on the map one can read their fate at a glance. Of all our villages, Brouchy with its hamlet of Aubigny, and Offoy had suffered least; Offoy because it had been chosen one of the centers of refuge into which inhabitants of neighboring communes were herded while the latter were being destroyed, and Brouchy perhaps because of its sheltered position off the main line of march. Be that as it may, Offoy, Brouchy, Sancourt, Canisy, Muille-Villette, Grécourt and Hombleux had left to them in 1917 what the vil-

lagers prized more than their own homes, their churches. No other public buildings were standing, schools, town halls, factories, railroad stations, even the tracks and the ties in many places, had been destroyed.



“THE IMPRESS OF THE RUINS”

The impress of these ruins, cropping like wreck-strewn reefs out of the dun expanse of the plain, or etched as we turned home to Grécourt upon a flaming sky, was of an indescribable loneliness. At night, in the surf of

cannon breaking rhythmically, ghostly leaves falling, falling from the plane trees, or, suddenly, the shriek of a train nearing the end of its perilous run from Amiens to Ham, that loneliness found voice. Small wonder that Marie, whose husband was fighting on the Chemin des Dames, ran out from time to time to view the horizon, or to lay her ear to the ground. Were the lines holding or breaking? Were the Germans coming back?

Yet in her concern, Marie was untypical of the villagers as we saw them. Whatever their fate had been or was to be, they accepted it. Communal life was organized as usual. The postman—or postwoman—went her rounds. The mayors proper being for the most part hostages, soldiers or refugees, acting mayors were elected in their places. Three of these were women. They were both conscientious and efficient. The information they gave us formed the basis of our social survey, in the course of which we learned from a personal angle the ruin wrought by the enemy. No family but had its quota of members in



slavery “avec les boches.” And yet, no family but had taken up anew the struggle for existence. Gardens had been worked with trench spades, furniture of a sort had been salvaged; they anticipated a winter of privation, but a winter “at home.”

In short, to them war seemed a fact of nature. We ourselves were one of its phenomena. Germans, Russian prisoners, Scotch, English, red-fezzed laborers, Indian princes, impassive Annamites, their own soldiers from unknown provinces,—all had defiled along the roads of Picardy, and now, late coming, we. From time immemorial the nations had thus passed; the Celts who have left one of their rude menhirs in Eppeville, Roman legionaries buried in military cemeteries in Brouchy and Villette, the Merovingians, the hosts of Charlemagne. It was from Amiens that Peter the Hermit preached the first crusade, and from Ham and Nesle and Roye and from their fiefs, our villages, that knights and squires followed their feudal lords during a span of two hundred years to deliver Jerusalem. Blondel,

troubadour of Richard Cœur de Lion, was born in Nesle, and Nesle itself, that poor ruin, was known from those days until the Revolution as "Nesle the Noble," the first Marquisate of the realm.

Some say that the crucifixes at our cross-roads were set there by these pious crusaders, to mark the stages of their march to the sea. Others aver that these, together with the churches, constituted places of asylum for the fugitives in that troubled country, as the chronicles have it, "never for a day without war." The Dukes of Burgundy and the Kings of France, the English and the Spaniards overran with fire and sword this plain. It was Jean of Luxembourg, Seigneur of Ham, who sold Jeanne d'Arc for a hundred pieces of gold. It was the Duke of Burgundy who desecrated the Collegiate church of Nesle in 1472 with a "brave butchery," and quitted that conquered and flaming city crying: "Behold the fruits borne by the tree of war!" In our day, the Germans bettered these their exemplars. For no military reason, they too violated the

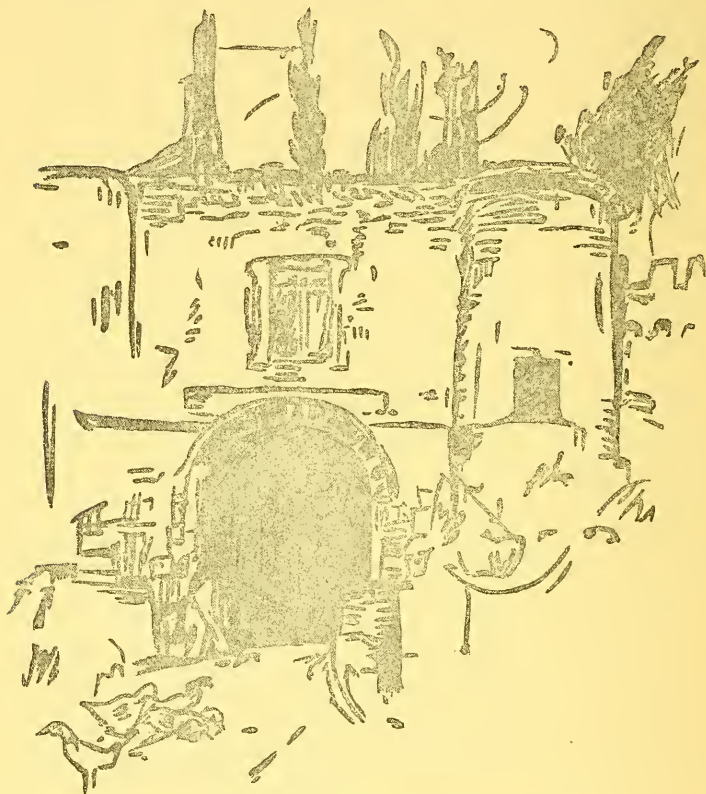


churches, profaned the cemeteries and mutilated the roadside calvaries.

To us who saw with the eyes of strangers the often ragged and dirty denizens of the ruins, only their level regard, their upright bearing recalled their past. They are known to-day by the same names that one finds five centuries ago; serf or seigneur, in the end the same blood runs in their veins. In some stable, you may come upon an altar piece, an original of the fourteenth century, perhaps, or upon a copper plaque etched with the arms of Péronne. And Madame, following your eye, will say simply, “Oh, yes, they have been in my family always. I saved them in my sack.” Or the Mayoress of Buverchy, sitting on a bench in the shed she calls her home, will tell you, with many an animated gesture, of the books they had in their library which narrated the history of Buverchy “when it was the great town of Caletot.” These alas! with the village records, with the very villages themselves, are lost.

The wonder grows that any land so historic

should have any record or any architectural monument or any inhabitants left. Not only



"CANISY HAS ITS STRONGHOLD"

were there played out here the dramas of Froissart; each foot of ground formerly be-

longed to an overlord, temporal or spiritual. Long ago they fought one another to ruins which may be traced in eight of our villages. Canisy has its stronghold of the eleventh century, Esmery-Hallon its Priory of Bonneuil. “I know not how it is in your country,” said one of our mayors one day, “but I suppose it is much the same as here, where every locality has its noble family taking the place of the ancient seigneur.” Custom, tradition, these have become here in Picardy the racial monument. Nothing could be more fitting in that province of the imagination whose ancient boundaries were never geographic, but were fixed only by the extent of her ancient language, the *langue d’oc* of song and chivalry.

So it came about naturally that we of the Smith College Unit were fitted by our neighbors into a scheme of life that they could understand. In spite of our unwonted, not to say peasant occupations, of uniforms, of masculine strength of hand, we were given throughout the countryside the sounding yet affectionate title of “*les Dames de Grécourt*.”

## CHAPTER VI

### MOLDS OF SERVICE

OF the 616,329 hectares of the Department of the Somme, are counted in round numbers: Tillable lands, 488,000 hectares. . . . The Somme is one of the best cultivated departments of France. . . . The sugar beet is the principal crop of the Santerre and of almost all the arrondissement of Péronne." Thus our region is described in Joanne's "Géographie de la Somme," before the war. In his Report on the economic condition of the Department on August first, 1918, the Préfet states: "The invasion caused a loss to the Department of 27 percent of its territory in 1914, and, to mention only the principal crops, 40 percent of the total harvest of wheat, 30 percent of oats, 60 percent of sugar beets, 20 percent of fodder beets, and 18 percent of potatoes. The mere enumeration shows to

what an extent the agriculture of the Department was affected at the beginning of hostilities."

But however great the disaster, it was matched by a courage as great. "The huge shortage created in the world of agricultural labor by the mobilization of the 25,000 to 30,000 cultivators or field workers of the Department, came near being fatal to agricultural production. It is thanks to the admirable steadiness of the rural population, in remaining in its homes, that we owe the conservation to the country of the greatest part of its economic power. Justly and often, the energy, the indomitable courage of the wives of the soldiers who have taken upon themselves the labor of men, have been placed in relief. In the Somme, as in the other departments, the country woman has shown herself equal to her task, and has compelled the admiration of the State. In addition, aged farmers who remained on their property and who in time of peace would have abandoned themselves to a well-earned repose, have set themselves once

more to work, aiding or guiding the young people who have become amateur laborers, drivers and producers on every hand."

We and the other relief societies were in the devastated area to answer in some sort the needs of this brave population. But how? It is characteristic of the patient courtesy of the French nation that they have never offered their Allies advice.

The broad outline of our own relief work had been made in America. There were the two doctors, one a Johns Hopkins graduate, and her assistant, who converted her internship into service in the devastated districts of France. In lieu of trained nurses, who were naturally in the greatest demand for the American Expeditionary Force, three of our number acted as volunteers. There were women skilled in children's work, carpentry and handicrafts; one was a farmer, one was a high-school teacher; six were trained social service workers, and six qualified as chauffeurs. Our efforts fell then, into five main divisions, public health, stores and supplies, farming,



transportation, and social service proper with its three sub-divisions of visiting, sewing and child-welfare. For the first six months a unit of eighteen carried out this program. Of these, two deserve special mention, as not officially members of our body; our housekeeper, Mrs. Roberta Cummings, a volunteer Red Cross worker; and our buyer of supplies in Paris, Mrs. Hannah D. Andrews, who became our Director in January, 1918.

The doctors, as has been said, were the first to begin. A doctor's bag was their main reliance, since boxes of medicines failed to come through. This meager source of supplies was augmented by the kindly coöperation of the military doctors of the region, and later, by a generous grant from the American Red Cross. Their base of operations at headquarters was at first a corner of the orangerie, which they shared with carpentry classes, gymnastics, and social gatherings. The orangery was also our garage. To make the rounds of approximately five hundred patients, they had their allotted share of transportation, with addi-

tional service, whenever possible, for emergency calls. They had also Tambour, an ancient horse detached from the artillery, a high two-wheeled cart, and a soldier in a brave new uniform, to drive. These last were a gift from the Sous-préfet at Nesle. But, most frequently, the Unit will recall our doctors, of a Sunday morning, or perhaps of a bitter afternoon, knapsack on back, starting cheerfully away on foot. Cheer, in fact, was their main stock of medicine. A boche baby was a baby, to be brought into the world as tenderly as any other on a winter's night. A gaunt-eyed child, lost by day in the bed where all the family slept at night, smiled over her first doll, bought with infinite care at Ham. Candy, hair ribbons, and more practical but perhaps not more efficacious, toothbrushes, beguiled the youngsters into habits of cleanliness. Then, too, there were fairy tales such as four-year-old Noël and 'Tásie had never heard in their war-invaded homes, of the little Love, *si petit, si petit, si petit*, of the big bear, the little bear and the bear of medium size, and of the fish



and the fisherman on the shore of the sea. Catechisms and hymns belonged to this delightful pharmacopæa as well, for Dr. Kelly remembered the France of her own childhood.

However, medicines and bandages had their place, particularly after the dispensary was installed, by the nurses themselves, in one of the portable houses. Here reporters were prone to take pictures of the medical department in action, under some such caption as: Red Cross Doctor and Nurses of the Smith College Unit Binding up a Shrapnel Wound near the Front,—the patient in this particular instance being Marie, who was suffering from that malady most common in our neighborhood, a carbuncle. Here, one day, such was our fame, an ambulance load of sick French soldiers drew up, under the mistaken impression that we were a military hospital! The dispensary was open officially six days in the week, and on Sunday was never quite shut. In addition, medical rounds were made in all the villages each week. In three villages, there were permanent dispensary quarters. All

medical service, medicines, combs and tooth-brushes and supplementary feeding such as eggs and milk from our cows, were free, to give the fullest encouragement to healthful living. In spite of the shortage of pumps and fuel everywhere the results were striking. One scarcely recognized the clean—though often ragged—children of 1918, as those who had watched so listlessly our arrival six months before.

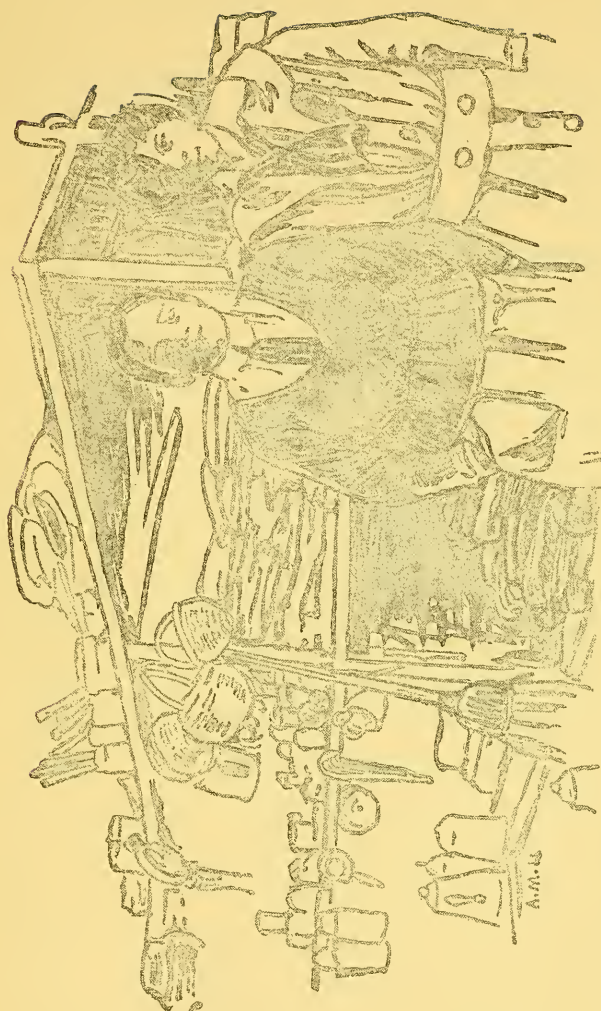
Even a sojourn in the hospital, that bug-bear of mothers and children in other districts than rural France, was made by our doctors into a joyous adventure. The hospitals were not our own. One was located at Blérancourt, fifteen miles away, under the auspices of the American Fund for French Wounded, and a second was opened in Nesle in November, 1917, by the American Red Cross. The doctors tell of a forlorn baby who was crying all night and keeping the mother awake, whom they finally took away. "And then, the mother came and complained that she could not sleep because she missed having to get up with it!" But

that same baby, and every child-patient who went to Blérancourt, came home with a "trousseau" of new clothes. They talked for days of clean white beds, and kind ladies, and a wonderful journey in an automobile out into the wide world.

Our store was our most picturesque and perhaps our most useful method of distributing actual relief. We cannot however claim the idea, because the English Society at Nesle had such a store in operation before our advent. Like most of the societies, they, and we, felt that the population should not be pauperized by too generous giving. The Government supplied a pension with the intention that it should be used to purchase necessities. It did not give outright even such articles as farm animals, tools or furniture, but issued them chargeable against a further indemnity to be paid to the victims of acts of war. We conformed to the Government plan in selling our small wares, though at a much reduced price. This system, we found, was quite readily understood by our villagers, because the Belgian

Relief Commission had used it in these same villages when they lay behind the German lines.

The stocking of our store began in Paris, and was continued in Noyon, where Baron Rothschild, attached to the Service de Santé, had inaugurated a number of sewing circles, or *ouvroirs*, for the destitute women, and placed on sale the finished garments. In addition, he carried soap, groceries, kitchen utensils and miscellanies, at cost. In those days the old Bishop's palace, which had housed one of the most powerful lords of the church in feudal times, was a plebeian but cheerful spectacle! To it, we made a weekly shopping trip. At the same time, our buyer bought tirelessly in Paris, and sent the goods up through the army by rail to Noyon, and thence by army camion, to us. In this way arrived the assorted stock of a country emporium. But we seemed to deal chiefly in galoshes such as, we are told, the ancient Gauls of this region wore in the mud of Cæsar's time. Galoshes, being indigenous, came in only one style of leather tops



"OUR STORE"

and clog-like wooden soles. Sabots, on the other hand, were subject to fashion; nor could we persuade our peasants to wear the all-wood variety of Brittany; they favored patterned leather tops. Another great source of our supplies was the American Red Cross, which allowed us to use our discretion in selling their donations if purchased by them in France, though, owing to customs regulations, we could sell no imported goods.

In spite of the rapid turnover of stock—for we had a fixed store at Grécourt three days in the week, and took the road with the White truck as a peddler's cart the other three—storage space presented an acute problem. Up to March, 1918, when the last of the poor villagers of Grécourt moved from the *basse-cour* into the shacks set up on their ruined farms, our store room was the cellar of the Château. At best, the light there was dim, becoming inky with the swift-falling winter nights. Repeated cleaning dislodged only surface filth, which seeped in again. The dampness ruined many



of our supplies. The cold seemed to congeal all effort. And yet, from early candle light till late, the cellar was the scene of Unit activity. Here in a donjon Mme. Topin chopped and sawed our wood; here came the dairy maid with her warm pails, wary of the low lintels; here the housekeeper penetrated to the meat-safe; here camions disgorged their cargoes, including thrice-precious coal, gasoline and oil. Here, in short, the Unit centered.

But when the truck, full-loaded, swung out of the gate, across the moat, and away, youth and laughter were aboard. If, in after years, the Somme peasants forget the full measure of their grief and those who mourned with them, they will never forget, I feel sure, that flash of color, that ripple of mirth along the somber roads,—the Unit's traveling store. Honk! Honk! What is that sound in the village street? From cellars, chicken-houses, shacks, patched cottages, from every nook and cranny, race the children to climb on the running board, and sing the progress to the square.

Here come now the mothers, shawls over heads, baskets in hand, chatting together while the storekeepers open hampers and boxes, hang up the tinware and display their goods. Lively questioning ensues, with approving nods at the prices quoted. One urges another on; some have commissions from stay-at-homes. The money is easy, the sales are brisk. It is like the old-time village fair! Soldiers billeted in the village pause and join in the chaffering; and the storekeepers presently add men's shoes and a certain amount of haberdashery to their weekly orders.

Meantime the children have vanished, for the truck brings not only the store, but the playground teachers to town. In some field in fair weather, in some shed, or sometimes in the schoolroom, when it rains, the children are gathered, boys in one group, girls in another, for gymnastics and games and rondes. In several villages there are regular sewing periods for the older girls, who watch the antics of their little brothers and sisters with amused in-



terest, and join their voices in the rondes:  
Then

“Où est la reine Margot, au gai, au gai, au gai,  
Où est la reine Margot, au gai, mon chevalier?”

sings the hunter on the outside of the wheeling circle, to be answered in chorus:

“Elle est dans son château, au gai, au gai, au gai,  
Elle est dans son château, au gai, mon chevalier.”

But games and sewing are not all; there are books to be distributed, books collected on the quays in Paris, in musty second-hand shops, from book supply houses, from charitable donors,—for children’s books became scarce in France in the years of the Great War. These, catalogued and covered with stout paper, go out now to rejoice the villages, where the grown-ups read them too. There are magazines also of current events, fiction and fashion. For a week they will be loaned, and replaced by others at the end of that time.

But, like all our activities, the children’s committee had its headquarters at Grécourt. Here on Thursdays of each week—the holiday

of the French school—came all the children within walking distance who wished to come. And who did not? The difficulty was to keep out the overflow of Ercheu and Moyencourt, who trooped in the back way over the meadows



"ALAS FOR THE DAY!"

and through the woods. Alas for the day! they belonged to the Secours d'Urgence and not to us.

On Thursdays, serious work went forward. There was the children's clinic in the dispensary, graded sewing classes for the girls, carpentry classes and clubs for the boys, games and gymnastics, and often a party for all. The carpentry classes excited much emulation. In

them we made benches and tables and shelves for the schools, opened with practically no equipment, in bare shacks or dingy rooms. After the needs of the school were attended to, the boys set to work with even more enthusiasm on rough furniture for their own equally bare homes. The clubs were a new idea in most of the villages, and the simple insignia, designed by the boys themselves, were worn with pride. It was an entering wedge against the restless habits of three years without regular schooling, three years of military occupation, of the excitements and hazards of war.

The girls' sewing classes, like the boys' carpentry classes, were designed to supply needs in the homes. Most of the girls had deft fingers, and much of the work begun in class was finished at home. In two villages, where there were as yet no classes in school for the girls, sewing clubs for which we supplied the materials were placed in charge of the teacher. As for knitting, no teaching was necessary to make the stout ribbed stockings of which every one had need.

These two industries were by no means con-

fined to the children. One member of the Unit had charge of sewing and knitting throughout our villages, and supplied material, cut into garments, to forty women. The price paid for the making was that fixed by the French Red Cross, which had large work rooms in Nesle and in Ham. Our women, being field workers, were most of them not expert with the needle. They undertook the sewing during the winter more for occupation than for anything else. All the garments returned went into our stores, to be distributed in relief, or sold.

The basis of charitable giving, with us, as with any relief organization, lay in investigation of family income and needs. We had our visitors, to each of whom was assigned one village, a method already worked out in conformity with the *marraine* plan by the American Fund for French Wounded at Blérancourt. But we went into our homes in the ruins with a very different point of view from that of the professional charity worker of the slums. Slums our villages might be. Eppeville, the

poorer artisan quarter of Ham, with its population of migratory refugees, here to-day and gone on their way to-morrow, was a case in point. But the majority of our poor had been prosperous, industrious farmers. Their embarrassment was temporary only; they were not to be classified in cold blood in a statistical survey. About their poor tables, beside their hearths, we sat and chatted over cups of coffee, or steaming bowls of soup. Theirs was a problem in economics, not in charity.

Hence, the end of all our effort was to stimulate normal communal life and industry. If there was a blacksmith without a forge, and a continuous stream of travel bound to require repairs, it was our duty to get the forge. If a community entitled to a shack for a school was not receiving it, we called the attention of the proper authorities to this oversight. If there was a grocer by trade, without a stock and with no means of transportation, we bought for him and delivered. If there were supplies of fodder, of hay, or of vegetables in storage in some barn, we paid for and con-

sumed them, putting money in circulation. Such were the obvious means of alleviation at our command. In line with this was our introduction of livestock for the purpose of supplying the people, and our agricultural program which was of prime importance in this farming country, and which developed with the spring into our main line of effort.

As for the habitually indigent, they were in a minority, and were known, as they would have been at home, in all the Mairies and to all the teachers, who are in France, ex-officio, the mayorial secretaries. Thus in every village a committee stood, readymade as it were, to help us. Despite the war, the mayor's lists were models of accuracy and neatness, his comments, or more frequently those of his wife, full of sense and human nature. Or, did they appear biased, there were enough country families of prominence with whom we might advise, to correct his judgment.

To one and all alike, we gave beds, bedding, mattresses, stoves and larger articles of furniture such as cupboards and sideboards—all

furniture of a temporary nature, which in the course of time they would need to replace with substantial pieces. This ruling was made to equalize our giving with that of the Government, which turned over its stores of indemnity furniture in our district to us. To the indigent we distributed the Red Cross supplies of clothing and our own, imported from America. For the rest, we used our discretion, taking as the general rule of our conduct, the advice given us by Mr. Homer Folks, the Director of the Department of Civil Affairs of the American Red Cross:

“When people have been through the experiences which befell the inhabitants of the devastated regions during the last three and a half years, I think we may safely deal with them in a somewhat more generous manner, . . . than would be the case in ordinary relief work at home.”

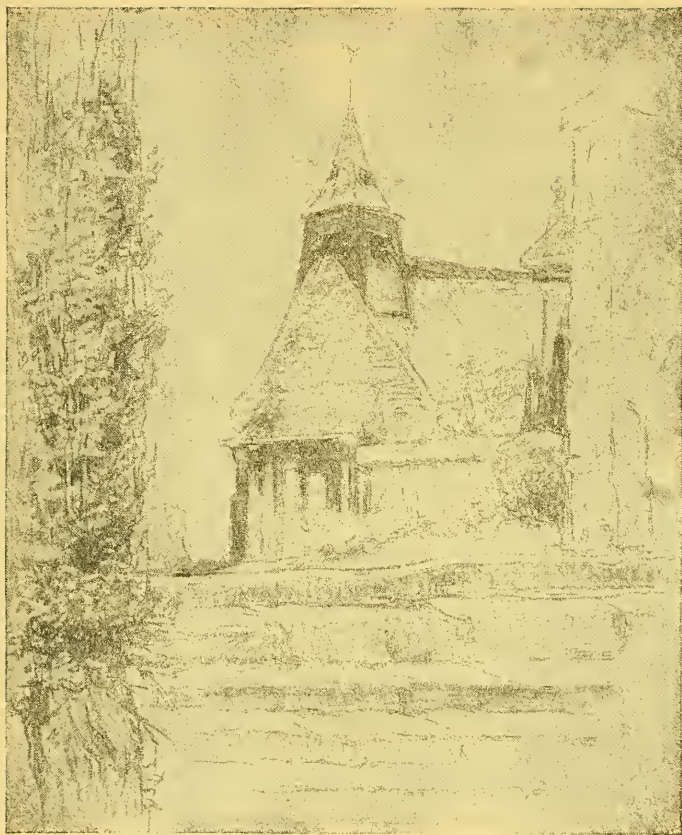


## CHAPTER VII

### CHRISTMAS OF THE LIBERATION

**I**N feudal times, and indeed until the ruin of the House of Nesle by the debaucheries which preceded the French Revolution, the spires of half of our village churches bore as weather vanes the two cocks which denoted their allegiance to that noble suzerain. Upon Nesle depended two thousand fiefs, among them the "important barony of Esmery-Hallon," Hombleux and Bacquencourt. From these villages at Christmas time went up the mayors, to sit as court of appraisal upon the wheat, oats, bread, capons, geese, pullets and other produce due the marquis in tithes,—a ceremony which began with the Magnificat, and concluded with a dinner given by the concierge of the Château to the mayors, the millers, the bakers, the tavern-keepers, the measurers and the cooks of Nesle. "Another feudal





**"A VILLAGE CHURCH"—MUILLE-VILLETTE**

obligation was also imposed, under pain of a fine, upon the mayors of the various dependencies and upon the millers of the town, which was to appear Christmas night in the great hall of the Château, to see the kindling of the huge log which was lighted each year in this way.”\*

In 1917, the spires of our churches were for the most part fire-gutted skeletons; in none of them pealed the Christmas bells; in none of the edifices were held the midnight masses so dear to the devout villagers. Yet 1917 marked for the Somme villages the Christmas of the Liberation. What though the moonlight flooded the plain, and made a target of half demolished ruins for German aviators, so that the Bishop of Amiens was constrained to forbid the midnight service? At least the Germans no longer sat at their firesides, or set up their laden Christmas trees, or celebrated in the churches the *Te Deums* of their victories.

At Nesle itself, the occasion was marked by

\**Histoire de l'arrondissement de Péronne*: Paul de Cagny, Vol. II, p. 452.

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ceremonies as brilliant, as moving, as any in her long history. M. le Sous-Préfet gave there a party to a thousand children, gathered from the town itself and from near-by villages. He presided in silver-braided uniform, the Army assisted in gorgeous red and gold and blue; French ladies of noble family hid their identity in the graceful veils of the Croix Rouge; the British of the Œuvre Anglaise, and the Americans of the Smith Unit, came in khaki and in service gray. But the children! They sat with mothers, grandmothers or grandfathers in that dingy hall, listening with all their ears to the grave, gracious Préfet, to the opera singer of Parisian fame whose *croix de guerre* scintillated at every breath, and looking with all their hungry eyes at the candled Christmas tree. For each child there was a present and a goodie, and a smile from the Sous-Préfet, who had brought his own family with him to Nesle. To their elders went a card from the Secours d'Urgence at Roye, bearing a picture of de Roty's "La Semeuse" and inscribed: "To those who have

no longer houses or gardens or sanctuaries, whose very soil is tossed by the storm of fire and sword—to them we send thee, swift-footed Sower.

“Their eyes are filled with the sight of ruins, but there remains to them the love of their land and their faith in work. Go, tell them that they are not alone. France is there, her noble Allies are there. The houses shall be rebuilt, the gardens shall flower again. The grain shall ripen once more in the furrows. We have not come to the end of plowing and planting, loving and hoping. A breath of righteous anger and liberating love has passed over the world. No crime shall rest unpunished, no one shall have suffered in vain.”

We too had our Christmas fêtes, a week of them, for each of our villages. Shopping began early on both sides of the Atlantic for six hundred children and a thousand adults. The College clubs in America sent us lists of the contents of generous Christmas boxes, but we on our part knew that these boxes would probably never arrive at Grécourt. So to Paris

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went shopping orders compiled from the lists given us by our mayors and annotated by our Christmas committee. There were wholesale orders of mittens, capes, stockings and warm underwear, as well as of toys. Besides purchases, there were ample Red Cross donations, donations from M. le Sous-Préfet, and from M. le Commandant at Guiscard. Some of the articles came from Noyon, and others, including the bags for candy, were made by our own women in the villages. But even so, as the week of our fêtes drew near, there were unexpected demands to be met. Early falling snow threatened to retard shipments from Paris. A shopping trip in our own truck to Amiens was therefore decided on and carried out over the bleak and drifted roads.

Then, village by village and name by name, the gifts were wrapped and stowed in sacks in the cellar. The cars were overhauled with special care, for the weather had turned bitter cold. But our program called for Christmas services as well as Christmas trees. After dinner in the evenings might have been heard

—if there had been any one on that starlit plain to hear—the songs of goodwill. Out in the stables, by the flare of lanterns, little Giselle and Laure and Georgette and Lucien, the only children in Grécourt, sang:

“Saint jour d’allégresse,  
O mon beau Noël,  
Dieu dans sa tendresse  
Vient à nous du ciel.  
Dieu dans sa tendresse  
Vient à nous du ciel.  
Noël, Noël,  
O mon beau Noël.”

And through the canvas walls of the dining shack came in chorus from the Unit:

“The first Nowell the angels did say  
Was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;  
In fields where they lay, a-keeping their sheep,  
On a cold winter’s night that was so deep.  
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell,  
Born is the King of Israel!”

On Christmas Day itself, however, the Unit was at home to its countrymen. There were American soldiers attached to French or British commands in our vicinity. There were our colleagues of the American Red Cross, and of the Friends. There were our rescuers





LUCIEN



of a memorable night of fog and perilous driving,—“just as good as Americans,”—the Canadian foresters. All these and any chance acquaintances of our side of the Atlantic, we invited to Christmas dinner at Château Robécourt.

Our great hall was doubtless no colder than that in which the Marquis of Nesle used to welcome his retainers, for those days, like ours, were lacking in window glass. In lieu of the Yule log, a monstrous German stove, luckily unearthed, heated one end of the orangery. From the lofty ceiling depended lanterns festooned with Christmas greens; loops of mistletoe and holly were caught in place along the walls by sconced candles. The table was heaped with turkey, cranberry and steaming potatoes. There was a fragrance of hot coffee which was served with real cream. Our guests, from a radius of thirty miles, numbered about seventy-five. They ate and danced and sang with war-time zest. Yesterday, to-morrow made as it were a spotlight of the present, and this was Christmas night.

A few days later, the orangery was again

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the scene of a Christmas gathering, our fête to Grécourt, Esmerly-Hallon, Hombleux, Bacquencourt and Buverchy, our nearest villages. There were distinguished guests at this party also, and one of the treats which M. le Sous-Préfet brought were tarts of white, white flour which he had commanded to be made for our children by the bakers of Nesle.

But the parties which were most memorable were those held in the distant villages; in Canisy, with an air battle taking place overhead; in the bleak ruins of Douilly, in Sancourt, where the sun went down blood red across the snow; in the soldiers' theater of Offoy, scarfed with the blue smoke of open braziers. There the Colonel of the regiment and the Mayor of the town united their gifts to ours. For the Colonel had sent one of his captains to Paris, where the captain's wife had, according to orders, spent many days in shopping for the children. And yet, the fête,—it was ours. To the Colonel we owed also the military chaplain who celebrated the Christmas masses, and his friend a young corporal who accompanied us everywhere, to lead in the singing or to do

any service that we would allow. Cold, desolate, and yet how happy, were those Christmas fêtes, never to be repeated, of 1917.

No, never to be repeated, for 1918 brings the picture of another Christmas, a refugee Christmas, for the exiles of Grécourt in a farmhouse at Rambouillet, a hundred miles away. It too was a Christmas of the Liberation, for the Armistice was already six weeks old, the hated invader had left the soil of France, their own villages in the Somme were free. To fulfill their happiness, fathers had come back from slavery with the Germans, and husbands from the colors. But the intervening year had held its ultimate sacrifices, the second flight of the villagers before the enemy, the dispersion of kinsfolk, some of them never heard from, the suspense when the fate of the world hung in the defense of Noyon and of Château-Thierry. Alas! into the breach at Noyon was thrown the regiment of the Colonel of Offoy, in repose at the moment. There, like many another, fell our friend the corporal.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE KAISER-SCHLACHT

THE new year of 1918 opened with momentous changes in the Somme. Even before we reached Grécourt, rumors had been current of the "Allied offensive," and of the extension of the British lines toward St. Quentin. These lines, pivoted on Amiens, ran westward to the Channel, and eastward as far as Chaulnes. Many a time on our trips up from Paris, we went by Amiens, changing there for the little train that ventured on to Ham, and many a time have we ridden with the Tommies, who stumbled out of the unlighted train into the darkness at Chaulnes. Already in November the advance police from British headquarters came down to investigate our reason for existing in the War Zone. They told us even then that our presence

might be unwelcome to their Army, the policy of the British being opposed to civilian workers of a semi-military rating, and particularly to women workers near the lines.

In January the long-expected extension of the lines took place. By the hundreds of thousands, the trenches to the north and east emptied themselves in blue-flowing arteries, coursing, day and night, down the Somme valley, to destinations to us unknown. Cavalry, commissariat and artillery, dented and camouflaged, passed with a hollow rumbling that shook the frozen roads. The aerodrome in our rear, where but a few days before dozens of new planes had lain, like butterflies with poised wings, ready for flight, swarmed overnight. The gypsy vans of the homing doves—strange birds of peace in the midst of war—joined in the exodus. It gave one a wrench at the heart to see that rearward movement, to see our Army go. Nor were they immediately followed in our sector by their successors. One wondered who was holding the lines. And then, they came down those same

roads, the Fifth British Army, a solid dun-colored stream. They overflowed into our villages and took up the quarters the poilus had left. Their officers, correct and spotless, came to call. Their Headquarters at length recognized us and allowed us to remain. To this desired end, the Sous-Préfet contributed with his request for our presence, and his testimony to the value of our work. He too remained, as did all the civil authorities. In fact, as the days passed, we found that we had only exchanged the coöperation of the French army for that of the British.

But an unforeseen handicap was a restriction of circulation, rigidly enforced. It caught us just at the end of our first six months of service, when a third of our number went home and were replaced by fresh volunteers. These latter were detained in Paris by the ruling that no new workers could be admitted to the Zone, so that our force at Grécourt was reduced to eleven. And this at the opening of spring, for which we had planned all winter the plowing and the planting and the

community centers, undertakings impossible during the inclement season.

Another change affecting our status was our formal transfer from the American Fund for French Wounded to the American Red Cross. This step was in accordance with our plan when we left America. It was important in that it gave the sanction of the American Red Cross to a college unit. Other units, equipped by women's colleges, were quick to enroll under the Red Cross and to follow us to France. But here again we were entangled in red tape which nearly stopped our circulating at all. Our cars, of which we had four at this time, had to have new permits; in short, they must be given new military numbers under the American Red Cross. Nor could they receive them by proxy; they must go to Paris. And once in Paris, they came near never getting out.

But it may as well be confessed that the Smith Unit has seldom allowed itself to be trammelled. If it had permits, well and good; if it had not, it was something like the Ameri-



can ambulances on the road from Verdun. On its errand of mercy, it too passed. Not that it evaded so much as persuaded. A clear conscience and a good cause usually won a way.

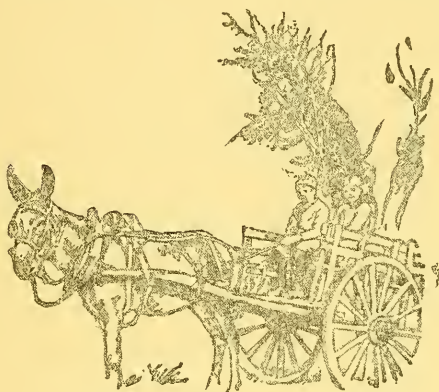
But the most serious anxiety of the Unit at this time was due to the fact that our two doctors were among those who left us, and that the doctor who came to replace them was held in Paris. Practically no medical work was possible for us. This want was partially met by the personnel of the Red Cross Hospital at Nesle, and by the coöperation of the military authorities, always vitally interested for their own protection in public health. To the Sixth Engineers of the American Army stationed at Voyennes, we owe special thanks for their surgeon.

The needs of our villages for shelter and for furniture were still emergent, owing to slowness of transportation, and the Unit was still delivering blankets, mattresses and beds. But the early spring, which carpeted our grove with anemones and violets and welcomed back the

nightingales, brought relief from biting cold. It brought also the season of agricultural activity.

A grant from the Red Cross and a trip to Amiens yielded us two plows. Others were borrowed from military dumps where broken farm machinery was being assembled and repaired. Horses and plowmen came from the British army, which like the French army—and like the German—carried out an extensive agricultural program. The plots we selected first lay in Grécourt, Bacquencourt, Canisy and Brouchy. They were of too small acreage to be worked by the army tractors, and yet too large to be worked—had labor been available—by the spade. Yet such holdings sown to wheat would total as much as the broad acres of the *propriétaires*. For, in Picardy especially, the adage of “no land without its seigneur” has come in modern times to mean no land without its owner. Renters of property are comparatively rare, and the farms once acquired by the peasantry have been handed down, with ever more mi-

nute subdivisions, from father to son. In fact, the first and by no means easy task of the farm committee had been to locate these holdings, from which the Germans had removed the boundary marks. It was in February, with three teams of horses, that the plowing began.



"FROM FATHER TO SON"

Seed wheat was supplied by the Government through the Ministry of Agriculture, but there was no adequate provision for vegetable gardens. These, however, were universal, from the bottom land gardens of Canisy which formerly supplied the markets of Nesle and of St. Quentin, to the kitchen garden of each

cottage. Seed for these the Unit undertook to furnish. A notice was posted in every village, and in some the town crier rang his bell and proclaimed, that the ladies of Grécourt would come on a certain day to take orders for seeds. The response was enthusiastic; the women crowded, lists in hand, about our automobile. And such lists! The French are past masters in classification as well as in intensive gardening. There was to be chicory, but it was to be curled; carrots, but short, medium or long, and lettuce, as one of the Unit put it, "for more seasons than we ever knew existed." Flower seeds were not forgotten. As for potatoes, a carload was ordered through government channels. In March, the Unit received its seeds in bulk. Every dish and pan and every member were requisitioned. To sort and do up the packages in grammes was a task like that of sorting a roomful of needles such as one reads of in fairy tales. But at length it was completed; the hundreds of allotments were ready for delivery on the twenty-first of March.

For this same date was set the opening of the Library in its own quarters, which the Tommies had helped to fit up. Seven hundred books stood on the shelves; there were games and tools which could be borrowed as well; there were a phonograph and a cinema. Painted tables and chairs, flowers and bright colored curtains made homelike the first circulating library in the Somme.

Community centers in three villages besides Grécourt were also a development of the spring of 1918. One was at desolate Douilly, where a social service worker was planning to live, one at Canisy and one at Verlaines. These latter were primarily for the children, and were in charge of two kindergarten teachers. Canisy, with a war population of fifty children, had had no school since before the German occupation. Verlaines, an appendage of Eppeville, had nominally been more favored. But practically it was crowded out in the poor makeshift of a building. Nor was there any kindergarten. Manual training for the boys, first aid, sewing and cooking for the

girls, were taught in both these centers. At Canisy regular class work in English for the older pupils and story hours for the younger, were added. At both Canisy and Verlaines, children's gardens with prizes, were to be a part of the curriculum. In both, the children themselves cleaned and whitewashed and hung curtains in the rooms and made most of the furniture. One hundred and eighty children attended in February.

Whether by the force of example, or by persistent following up, or both, the public schools themselves improved steadily in equipment during this period. Desks, chairs and blackboards began to take the places of rough tables, benches and a strip of black painted wall. School baraquas neared completion; even Canisy saw the Moroccans lay the foundations of its school. The Unit shared the good fortune which seemed to brighten the future of the villages; its own living baraque, long-promised and long-lost, at length arrived. Then it rejoiced in a dining-room and a kitchen under the same roof, in a butler's pan-



try, and a living-room. There was a work room for the sewing, which had grown to a considerable industry; there were to be a carpentry shop and a gymnasium. At last the stables were evacuated by the happy villagers of Grécourt, whose baraques stood trimly on the sites of their ruined homes. At last the miscellaneous assortment of supplies in our cellar, the soap which turned to suds, and the sugar which melted to syrup, the moldy shoes, the rat-eaten clothing, were transferred to those same stables in orderly array.

And at last came the twenty-first of March and the Kaiser-Schlacht of the Battle of Picardy. The Unit, keeping kindergarten, sorting seeds, unpacking boxes of crêpes and toys which had just arrived from Japan, heard that offensive begin. But it had lived long on the edge of danger, it felt safe in the shelter of the British army, it had learned to discount rumors, even the recurrent rumors of the German advance. What though the baraques shook with the impact of the terrible barrage? The seeds must be sorted, the gifts for the



children must be ready for Easter, the work must go on. That night the good sense of the Unit seemed justified; the cannonading died down. We went to bed not knowing that the German hosts were again on the road to Paris and only ten miles away. No whisper of breaking lines came through to out-of-the-way Grécourt.

Nor were the villages themselves warned. By forced night marches, in absolute silence, 580,000 men had been massed on the St. Quentin front. Opposed to them was the Fifth British Army of 170,000, whose lines of defense even had not yet been consolidated. Shielded by a dense fog, the Germans crossed No-man's-land. They fell on the British trenches. By the morning of the twenty-second, word reached us through the Sous-Préfet and later through a British officer, that the Germans were approaching Ham. The cars went out in haste at the news, to help in evacuating our villages. One went to Ham itself for gasoline, one to Verlaines, where the entire population was entrusted to us, and a

third crawled through the congestion of choked roads in an effort to reach Canisy. Beyond Ham, Offoy, Douilly and Sancourt were cut off. We heard afterwards how M. Vernes and M. Quellien, reckless of danger, raced the Germans in a high-powered car, and rescued the populace by a special train which pulled out in full bombardment. But by the time we were warned, Canisy was being shelled, and there was no escape. There remained the refugees from Esmery-Hallon, Hombleux, Buverchy, Bacquencourt and Breuil, who began to stream on foot or in wagons toward Roye and Montdidier. For the German advance, sweeping almost to the gates of Amiens, quickly overran the railroad. Our own village of Grécourt was slow to leave its new baraqucs, its freshly planted gardens, and its furnishings so lately acquired.

We ourselves staid. British troops, exhausted, straggled by dozens and by hundreds toward night through the gates of the Château. The Unit's first canteen began with them. Hot coffee was served until after mid-

night. A breakfast was left ready on the stove for the morning, and clean dishes set out for the meal. Meantime, the cannon were deafening, big British guns emplaced in our fields adding to the clamor. Our cows had been sent on in advance; our other belongings were entrusted to the British, to be used, or, as a last resort, to be destroyed. The cars were overhauled and stowed with a meager assortment of duffles, suitcases, blankets and food. The records, the pure bred poultry and Fury, our pet dog, were also to be evacuated.

At dawn, the crackle of mitrailleuse could be heard distinctly. The major in command at Grécourt warned us to be off. "And so, in the faint gray mist—that mist which had been so fatal to the British Fifth Army—we rolled through the gates for the last time," and took in our turn the refugee road through Roye to Montdidier. But our usefulness did not end with our flight. Under orders from the French Mission attached to the British Army, our four cars scoured the country. The old, the feeble and the new-born, our own vil-

lages and dozens of others owed their escape to us.

In Montdidier itself, we took charge of the embarkation upon the refugee trains. The scenes were heartrending, families scattered, sacks and furniture and animals saved thus far abandoned for lack of space. Here too we set up canteens, to which the American Red Cross and the Quakers contributed their stores and their personnel. For all the relief organizations driven out from our sector met in Montdidier. By the following day the Red Cross authorities from Paris had come up to direct the retreat for their own units, of which we were one. Accordingly five of our number were ordered to Amiens. But Amiens that night suffered the most severe bombardment of the war, and the next day the Red Cross joined in the general evacuation, heading for Beauvais. Meantime, Montdidier was being given up. "There was almost panic in the air," reads one of the Unit notebooks. "People were fairly tearing to the train with their carts and wheelbarrows of baggage."

But "when we left the hastening streams of evacués and army traffic in the streets and went into our hotel for dinner, we seemed in another world. The proprietress had laid the table most carefully with clean linen and the choicest crystal and china she owned, and lighted it with candles. She waved her hand toward it with pride. 'Voila,' she said, 'it is thus the Boches shall find my house when they enter it!'" Other pictures this notebook has, of a British major in charge of a detachment in a little village just coming within range of German bombs, "strolling around with his pipe in his mouth and an air of being bored in general, who insisted on having bacon, fried eggs and coffee served to us." On every page, in every account, is testimony to the wonderful nerve of the British, both officers and men, during that Great Retreat. "If there was a blunder—which only time can tell—it was higher up, and those men who gave their lives that week should be freed from any breath of blame."

Equally unstinted is the praise of the refu-

gees. "I cannot tell you," says one, "how patient and uncomplaining they were." "Among them," writes another, "came Mme. B—— and Alphonsine from Buverchy. And as with the others of our villagers who had been with us at Montdidier, I felt as though each forgave the other all iniquities and there was nothing left but friendship and sympathy."

There are glimpses of a distracted mother of nine children, strung along each on a different gun carriage; of hurrying dispatch carriers; of booming batteries. In a certain village the French reënforcements were in position, "and as we went on there was a deafening noise of guns. I was looking around to see where it came from and a French soldier said, smiling, that we needn't be afraid, they were French guns. I allowed I wasn't afraid, but I'd like to see them, so we went up a little road back of the church, and there was a French 155 mm. gun. I wanted to see it fired, so stood by till all was ready, then when they fired stepped back under shelter, for it shook tiles off roofs, made



the walls totter and gave out a noise like a thunderbolt, as it leapt up and then sank languidly down again."

As for the Unit itself, one member had time occasionally to sight another making soup, boarding trains to distribute food, driving, or "with a blanket full of hunks of bread on her arm, managing traffic with her characteristic efficiency." But for the most part, it seems to have been quite preoccupied. The newspapers in America which featured for a day "the heroism of the Smith College girls" knew better than the Unit what it was accomplishing along the roads from Grécourt through Roye, Montdidier and St. Just to the allied headquarters in Beauvais. In retrospect, it treasures the testimony of the American Red Cross: "They have lost their equipment, to be sure, but they have saved the lives of hundreds of French women and children and old people. Each girl was charged with the evacuation of a village, and each one stuck to her post and rescued her people in spite of shell fire. We have believed for a



long time that American college girls were equal to any emergency. We have never had a finer example of their courage and ingenuity than that which this small band of Smith girls has given us. Major Perkins wants more like them in France."

## CHAPTER IX

### "AFTER THE WAR"

OF how the French saved the line at Lassigny, in what Lloyd George called at the time the most wonderful bit of swift military organization the world has ever known, of the bombardment of Paris, of Château-Thierry, of the Argonne drive, it is not the province of this story to deal. In the annals of the war, one comes across occasional mention of the Smith College Unit. It too was there. There, ten miles from Verdun, in the canteens which it had organized for our own army, the Armistice found it on the eleventh of November, 1918.

The hush of that truce fell almost painfully upon ears long keyed to uproar, upon spirits taut with excitement. It threw out of employment, millions upon millions of men. It disjoined vast plans, among them those of

the American Red Cross, of which we were an infinitesimal part. The magic fabric of Red Cross organization with the American Expeditionary Forces was doomed to dissolution. Within a month, the Unit, save for two members who accompanied the Army of Occupation to Coblenz, was back in Paris, without a job. Yes, it walked the streets of Paris many days, from the offices of the American Red Cross—that house of cards so soon to crumble—to those of the Ministry of the Liberated Regions, trying to learn what were the policies of the hour. Of its own purpose, it was already sure. On the morning of the Retreat, its leader had written to the Committee in America, "Tell every one that when the proper time comes, we will return and rebuild our villages."

These villages, which had been freed by the victorious advances of early September, were offered to us once more by the Ministry. We knew, from tours of inspection, that the inhabitants were coming back. In other regions societies similar to ours had already resumed

their functions. But as for the Somme, we were told on the one hand that if help did not arrive by January, a whole harvest would be lost, and, on the other, that it would be criminal to encourage a return to their ruins of the destitute refugees.

In spite of our previous experience, the problem was a new one to us. In 1917, our villagers had not been evacuated en masse, to a great distance from their homes; they had saved some things, and their most emergent physical needs had been supplied before our advent. In 1918, they were dispersed to the four corners of France and beyond the border in Germany. They would come back from exile and from imprisonment with only what they could carry by hand, to ruins four times denuded by the successive struggles of opposing armies. In 1917, they could rely upon their own army of occupation for food and labor; in 1918, only upon the civilian authorities, still hampered by military exigencies, and upon German prisoners. In 1917, the liberation came in the spring, with all the summer

of production ahead; in 1918, on the threshold of the inclement winter.

But of all the discouragements and problems which faced us, the greatest was the decision of the American Red Cross not to re-commission its units of civilian relief. As a part of the American Red Cross, we were not free even to accept the offer of our villages made by the French Government. Back of this decision of the Red Cross were reasons we could not know. They concerned us only in so far as they might apply to any outside agency entering on the after-war field of rehabilitation. Rumors were current that the French did not want American personnel. If so, we were not justified in withdrawing from the Red Cross, or in soliciting money to continue as an independent unit. What was to be done? We took counsel of many, notably of our former official head in the Red Cross, Mr. W. B. Jackson, and of Mr. George B. Ford. The latter, an architect and a liaison officer between the American Red Cross and the French Government, was an excellent

adviser. We asked to be released from the Red Cross, and accepted from the French the responsibility of our villages.

In doing this, we had throughout the greatest practical assistance from the American Red Cross. Its decision to withdraw its direct agents of relief was made in favor of a larger plan, that of stocking great warehouses at central points in the devastated area, which should be reservoirs of supply and of transportation on a wholesale scale of all relief agencies in their districts. There were seven of these warehouses in the devastated area. From two of them, those at Compiègne and at Amiens, we drew heavily. In addition, the Red Cross furnished us with three new camionettes, so that our transport consisted of our original White truck—of which we are very proud—a passenger Ford, a Ford jitney and the three camionettes, making six cars in all. To this means of locomotion, we added, as we had done in the spring of 1917, the convenient bicycle.

But in December, 1918, it may well be be-

lieved that bicycles were not in use. The first official act of the Unit, after its decision, was to make a Christmas tour of its villages. On the morning of the twenty-fourth two cars left Paris, heading through a driving sleet for Grécourt. They carried four members of the original Unit, and one who had never seen our old home before. In Compiègne, a halt was made to do Christmas shopping for the children who were sure to be back. For Compiègne, terribly bombed as it had been the preceding summer, had waked to life. Not so Noyon. The Cathedral, which Robert Louis Stevenson once likened to a gallant battle ship, still reared its shattered towers above the rolling hills. But the town which had clustered since the days of Charlemagne under its protection, was practically destroyed and uninhabited. Topping the rise between Noyon and Guiscard, the cars sped on over the plain, which seemed to bear in its winter nakedness the hideous scars, not only of the Great War, but of the sorrows of all its past. Verhaeren saw his plains thus haunted:



"It is the plain, the plain," he cries,  
"Where nothing sounds but fear and pain . . .  
Where course along the rutted roads,  
Mingling their identity  
With fields of sorrow and of poverty,  
Despairs and Miseries . . .

"And the great arms of Christs funereal,  
At the crossroads, in the twilight  
Looming larger, seem suddenly to lift,  
In cries of fear, toward the lost sun. . . .

"It is the plain, the plain,  
Dun and endless as hate!"

But at length, the cars halted in the ruins of Brouchy, whose outlines had not greatly changed. Here there were indeed the children and their elders, a hundred souls in all. Among them some were strangers to us, for they had come from that great tribulation, captivity behind the German lines. But one and all, they welcomed us, asking eagerly when we should return to Grécourt. Passing on to Offoy, which in 1917 had escaped almost unscathed, we found it had been severely shelled in the contested crossings of the Somme Canal. Like Sancourt and Douilly, it was uninhabited. At Canisy, on the other side of the Canal, three men, returned prisoners from



"CHRISTS FUNEREAL"—BROUCHY

Germany, were living in a hovel and trying to patch up homes against the coming of wives and children. At Buverchy, the other extreme of our sector, again the signs of bitter conflict were evident. The Canal du Nord had been fortified by the enemy as one long trench. The fields between Buverchy and Grécourt, Bacquencourt, Breuil and Hombleux had been the theater of struggle about the key of the German defense just north of Hombleux, known as Côte 77.

But in Hombleux, thirty-one of our neighbors were already back. Esmery-Hallon, Verlaines, Muille-Villette had their quotas. And when the cars drew up at length at the Château Robécourt, who should be looking out of the one pane of glass left in her window, but the care-taker, our old friend Marie. Not only was she there, but her soldier husband, on leave for the fête, her mother and her two boys. Apparently oblivious to the gaping *basse-cour*, the breached walls of Mme. la Baronne's garden, the shell holes, litter of ammunition and blasted woods—for here the

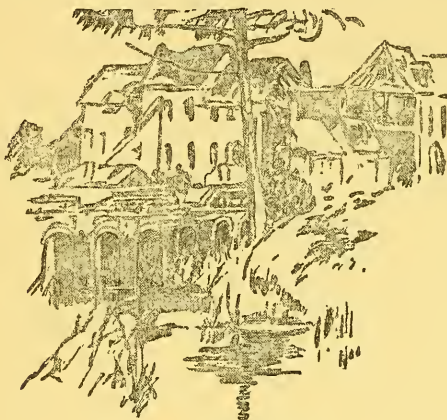
Germans had emplaced a powerful battery—Marie was at home. “For here,” said she, “one has everything—a roof, wood, two fires. It is much better than Paris.” And forthwith she invited the cold and hungry travelers in.

From the Somme to the Riviera, sunny as its mimosa blooms, was a contrast long to be remembered. It was at Nice, in the week between Christmas and New Year’s that the Unit, on leave for the moment, perfected plans for its return to the ruins in January. It knew well what it faced. Grêcourt itself was uninhabitable. There was only one store in all the region, at Roye. Food came in once a week through the army from Amiens. But at least the Unit had more resources than the brave—one might almost say the foolhardy—villagers, most of whom had staid on in the ruins after the expiration of temporary passes issued so that they might look over their property. In Paris, on the rue de Rivoli, could be seen day after day the long cue of exiles, waiting their turn for those precious permits. Our permits were ready, and on New

Year's Day we journeyed again to the Somme. This time, we made a distribution in bulk of blankets and warm clothing through all our villages. Shortly after, three of our number,—all there were room for,—took up temporary quarters at Nesle. There Mme. and M. Vernes of the French Red Cross were already established. Nor did M. Vernes' new title of *Délégué au Contrôle de la Somme* prevent him from spreading jam on slices of bread and butter for the children's Christmas fête.

From Nesle as a base, the country-side was searched to find living quarters. The choice fell upon Lannoy Farm, situated about a mile from Grécourt and placed at our disposal by the Baron de Thézy. Lannoy, in 1917, had been the hospitable goal of many a pleasant walk through the woods and across the fields. Then the Baroness de Thézy welcomed us, muddy as we were, into the gracious drawing-room which in former days had looked out over flower gardens and moat to the Baron's level acres. A fire always burned on the hearth, polished furniture and warm-colored

upholstery gleamed in its light. There were cows in the stables, and pats of golden butter in the dairy which found their way to our table at Grécourt. Not that Lannoy even then was without its war history. The Baron himself



LANNOY FARM

was a hostage; the farm had been occupied by a German commissary detachment whose bold lettering still adorned the massive gate. Its gray quadrangle of barns and stables was already partially destroyed. In 1918, the destruction was completed. Situated on the very edge of the Canal du Nord, it had been



a stronghold of the British in the spring, and of the Germans in the fall. French guns, which drove the Germans out, left it a striking ruin. Across the moat, in a newly made cemetery, lay marked with wooden crosses the graves of British, French, Germans and one American. On two British crosses were the dates: March 25, 1917. In the moat itself was débris of all kinds, including household furniture which the Germans had thrown out. Unexploded ammunition littered the court; a mound of helmets, shells, equipment and wreckage of all kinds rose in the center; the chimneys were mined. But the Unit saw possibilities in some of the rooms which still had four sides, roofs and floors. From the French major at Nesle, they got a detail of twenty-five German prisoners to clean up Lannoy Farm.

But had it not been for the girls themselves, that Augean task would never have been accomplished. They did not dress in rubber boots, riding breeches and peasants' smocks with any intention of shocking the conserva-



tives—should such have returned—of the Somme. They dressed for their work. Cleaning wells, hauling water, cooking, mending chairs, scrubbing, such was their daily round. And when at last in February Lannoy was filled by the happy and reunited Unit, it was only to serve its turn as a *pied à terre* for the more august task of cleaning up Grécourt.

For, after an inspection of all the ruins, in all possible places, the Director of the Unit came to the decision that there were no ruins to compare with its ruins. The peasants went back to their own homes, on their own land, whatever their condition. We would go back also, to be in fact as well as in name, the “Ladies of Grécourt.” But it was not on the original site that our three baraques, begged from an engineer’s dump of our old allies, the Third French Army, were erected. Back of the Baronne’s garden was found a field, very muddy in those winter days, but destined with the spring to cherry and apple blossoms in the orchard, and song birds in the coverts of the encircling woods.

## CHAPTER X

### HOME TO GRÉCOURT

THE matter of housing did not delay the Unit's program of relief. Four members of the original Unit shaped the policies



"HOME TO GRECOURT"

of the new Unit at this time. One had become director, one was the farming expert, one the storekeeper and the fourth chauffeur, nurse's aid, sewing teacher and housekeeper as op-

portunity served. Of the eight newer members, one was a mechanic and took charge of the most important branch of our service at all times, transportation. There were a kindergartner and playground expert, three social service workers, a farmer's assistant, and one of versatile accomplishments and fluent French, who became our Paris buyer. And yet, it is perhaps invidious to single out any member as versatile, or to stigmatize any other as a specialist. For this is how the Unit appeared to an early visitor:\*

"Spring was in the air. Every tree not killed by the boches was budding, the woods white with bloodroot or yellow for miles with jonquils. . . . Then here and there a garden; ruined brick walls, shell-pitted, with a center of primroses of all colors. A group working in the fields, a few here and there in the ruins of their home and town, all smiling at the girls in the Ford car; and realizing that it is these girls who made reconstruction possible once, and will do it again. This second time,

\*George B. McCallum, Treasurer of Smith College.

when it is so much harder, the destruction so much greater. . . . Does a puncture and then a slow leak half an hour later bother the combination executive, doctor, nurse, chauffeur, farmer? Not a bit. Just a part of the job to get that load of mattresses delivered. Does a child need its head cleaned, an infected finger cared for, bad burns dressed; does an invalid require two feet of water pumped from what was a good cellar, do the bones in the French cemetery unearthed by exploding shells require reburial?—the Smith Unit does it. . . . They did, and are doing their job, with smiles, laughter, jokes, like any group of undergraduates, while their work-a-day clothes are dirty and torn, and their hands show the grime of hard work and the broken nails that go with it. . . . These *Dames de Grécourt* are law and order and hope in sixteen villages.”

Assuredly this second time the problem of reconstruction was harder. Our arrondissement of Péronne had suffered most heavily of the five arrondissements of the Somme; of its 120,549 hectares, 98,461 had been completely

churned by shells. The most populous arrondissement before the war, by midsummer even only 21,364 of its 93,378 normal population, or less than one fourth, had been able to return. In the entire department, 208 villages were reckoned as totally destroyed and 176 as damaged. Among the 50,000 buildings—and still not counting towns such as Ham, Nesle or Roye—were 234 village halls, 254 churches and 285 schools. In our own villages there was not a single house undamaged; the destruction of buildings was twice what it had been in 1917, and the destruction of furniture, farm equipment, orchards and stock was complete. As for industry, in rebuilding alone, since 1917, 10,500,000 francs had been expended by the Prefecture. This was a total loss.

The Government, both at Paris and at Amiens, was alive to its responsibilities. The law concerning the reparation of the damages of war passed in April, 1919, enacts as its first article that: "The Republic proclaims the equality and the solidarity of all the French

before the charges of the war.” But these charges were—and are—stupendous, nor does an armistice constitute peace. “If we could only make people understand,” wrote home the Director of the Unit, “that the end of hostilities did not bring the young men of France back from the dead, or raise their ruined homes from the ashes.” She adds later: “France cannot demobilize. The French are still on a war, not a peace footing, making it impossible for the Government to turn its whole attention to reconstruction.” An instance in point is that boys who had attained military age while prisoners in Germany, were sent at once to serve their military training.

The Unit, itself homeless and a refugee, was to share with its villages the discouragements of “after the war.” On the other hand, for the very reason that it had shared with them the vicissitudes of the war, it was quickly in a position to help. It went to the Somme at the invitation of the Ministry of the Liberated Regions in Paris, which gave it back its villages. But it found on arrival, that it must



procure the prefectorial permission of the newly appointed Secretary-general of Reconstruction for the Somme in Amiens. And, having gone to Amiens, it was sent in turn to the new Delegate for the Coördination of Aid Societies of the Somme at Nesle. But the latter was our old friend M. Vernes. Needless to say, the grant of our villages was confirmed. M. Jourdain, the Director of Agriculture for the Somme, gave us a ready co-operation based on our accomplishments before the Drive. The Secretary of the Préfet received us literally with outstretched hands; he had seen the Unit evacuate Montdidier. Nor was the coöperation of the Third Army a dead letter. They still had their headquarters in Compiègne. And after the Prefecture had told us that we could not look to it for living quarters, because it had on hand only forty-seven of the ten thousand baraques needed, and after we had been refused by the army certain baraques which we had discovered in Hombleux, our Director went to headquarters in Compiègne. Not only did she receive the



## 134 Ladies of Grécourt

baragues, but the transport to haul them and the engineers to put them up. From that same army dump in Hombleux came besides, treasures as valuable and as varied as ever were washed up by the obliging sea for Swiss Family Robinson.

By the first of February the relief activities of the Unit were well established; orders for seeds had all been placed, buying of sheets by the thousand and soap by the ton were going forward in Paris, and our first carload of ten cows had arrived from the cow merchant with whom we dealt in the old city of Vannes in Brittany. From the south of France came as far as Paris crates of poultry, ducks, geese and rabbits, which we transhipped there. Yet it was thanks to the Red Cross at Amiens and at Compiègne that our first relief supplies came through. From Compiègne we could truck for ourselves in a small way; from Amiens, through the good offices of the Prefecture, seven freight cars loaded with Red Cross blankets, woolens and furnishings arrived in February at Nesle.

From this time until the first of May, the chief duty of the entire staff of the Unit was the hauling and the delivery of goods. Two of our six cars, though shipped from America in 1918, were in March, 1919, still at Bordeaux. A trip was made the entire length of France, to get them. The chauffeurs' account of this Odyssey begins with their threatened arrest en route by an American Army detective "for a crime committed in Bordeaux by four American women. 'One was very tall' (here he looked at —), 'one was very short' (from his scrutiny I could not help but feel that I was number two), 'one had gray hair.' (He assured us there was a woman in the next compartment answering to that description)." As owing to the process of transferring our personnel from the American Red Cross to the French Government, our travelers were "a trifle short on papers," it took them some time to establish their identity as "members of a Unit doing noble work miles from the city of Bordeaux." The cars, when finally located, were found to be terribly mil-

dewed, rusted and warped. However, the account ends with the arrival in Grécourt, where "we are still trying to get the kinks out of our backs and the delightful swaying motion of touring in Fords out of our brains."

A companion picture on transportation is the following, dated two weeks later. "Tomorrow, when we have to be in Gournay, 100 kilometers away, with a car to bring hens from the hen market . . . a freight carload of wardrobes arrives at Nesle, a freight carload of potatoes also reaches Nesle from Amiens, the man from Brittany arrives with two carloads of cows and several young calves that cannot yet walk, and at just that moment the two army horses we use are sick and have to go back to St. Quentin, so we are obliged to do what we can to unload the awful conglomeration in the very short time the railroad allows us, with our own autos which can at best carry two wardrobes a trip." There were twenty-seven wardrobes. It is five miles to Nesle.

But there was little complaint on the part

of the Unit when goods at last arrived! Their non-arrival, and worse their non-existence in war-stripped France, is the ever wearying obstacle. Three days' search in Paris was rewarded by the finding of a dozen odd spades, when hundreds were ordered; the replacing of the library lost in the retreat of 1918 took months of expert searching; broken pumps could not be repaired for lack of leather washers, outhouses could not be built for lack of lumber. In fact, everything is not only much dearer, but much scarcer than in 1917 in the trade centers, transportation is periodically at a standstill, and in the devastated regions themselves, there is worse than nothing. For it would be far easier to abandon the ruined sites of farms and villages and to let the land grow up to its ancient forests, as some have advocated, than to clear the wreckage of war.

As in 1917, with reconstruction proper, we had nothing to do. Our lines of relief were obvious, but they were limited in two directions by the Government. We were requested to provide no food, and not to give, but to sell

our supplies. Food, on a carefully estimated per capita basis, was under the control of the Government. The selling instead of the giving of supplies was in accordance with the terms of the law of war indemnities, which provided, as in 1917, a living allowance for refugees, and a final reimbursement of all losses, *provided these losses were replaced in kind*. This applied to cows, poultry, beds, mattresses, stoves, garden implements and furnishings of all sorts in which we dealt. Our contribution was the buying, transporting and delivering, for which service no charge was made, and the reduced prices at which we sold. For cows, however, as the price came back to us from the Prefecture, we made no reduction beyond the wholesale price. For all other commodities, a reduction of one half to one third of the cost prevailed. But in special cases, we did give outright, as when we made initial distributions in bulk throughout the villages, or outfitted some family just returned against the cold. Nor did we always sell for cash, because the long promised indem-

nity is long delayed. In our region, the affidavits of losses were not made out until September, 1918. And this was merely the first step to the appraisal of the property before special courts of inquiry and adjustment. So, it was often only a voucher which passed between the purchaser and us.

As in 1917, the store fared through the villages each week; it also stocked as before half a dozen little groceries. But gradually the gaping streets of Ham and Nesle began to be repeopled. Ham especially organized a vigorous reconstruction. Narrow gauge tracks, such as had formerly been used in carrying up ammunition, were laid in the streets; hundreds of German prisoners were employed, and tons of broken bricks and mortar from that once lovely town were hauled by the trainload to dumps outside the old historic walls. A mercer's shop was the first to open here; soon groceries, meats, vegetables, fruits, hardware and baskets were advertised by wooden or canvas signs tacked above some kind of a shelter. By summer, one met pushcarts like those in



the foreign quarters of our cities, hawking notions and dry goods through the village streets. A woman was usually the vender, and often little children clung to her skirts. "What would you?" said one of these encountered one day five miles from her home. "My husband was killed in the war, I have the children, I must work."

In favor of these small merchants, our store gradually raised its prices and at length closed its doors in September, 1919. In the seven months since it opened, it had done a business of 152,363,000 francs, reckoned by sale and not by purchase price. When the White truck, loaded to capacity, made its final trip, there was universal lamentation. "It is you," said the women, "who have kept the prices down. Now they will soar—oh, là, là!" But it was not merely on the score of bargains—in which the Picard is a true cousin of the Yankee—that they regretted the storekeepers. The event of their lives vanished with them, nor could they but believe that the "Dames de Grécourt" would have no more



reason to stay in their midst. It was the beginning of the end.

But there remained one department that could keep on indefinitely, one might almost say, in the devastated Somme. The Picard farm knows no slack season; the year round, summer and winter the farmer is busy. And our farm department is still busy and without competition in supplying primarily the needs of the small farm. The landed proprietor looks to the Government for advances of capital, to the Government batteries of tractors for plowing and harrowing, to the Ministry of Agriculture and to the agricultural department of the Prefecture for seeds, for stock, and even in some cases for farm machinery. He bands himself with others into local associations, which are federated into departmental and finally into national coöperatives for the common holding and use of tractors, the regulating of farm labor and the buying of supplies. But the organization of coöperatives for the small farmers was backward in the Somme. In lieu of this, we became vir-

tually such a source of supply to them. We had our tractor and our sulky plow, which up to the middle of September had plowed and harrowed two hundred acres. The work was plotted week by week among the villages, at the price per acre which the Government charged. In the same length of time, we had supplied over a thousand farm implements, 6,000 kilos of seed potatoes, 600 assortments of garden seeds, and 142 kilos of other seeds of different varieties. To restock the farms, we had brought in 110 cows, 2 bulls, 28 goats, 21 sheep, 69 pigs, 1,500 rabbits, 3,000 hens, 1,200 pullets, 550 geese, 850 ducks, 27 turkeys and 1,100 eggs for setting. By fall the department had ordered, surveyed and set out, under direction of an expert, five thousand trees. Most of these were fruit trees for individual owners, but included in the order was a little grove of nut trees for each village.

These totals have mounted from truckloads of a hundred hens brought from Paris, from all day marketing in Gournay-en-Bray, until

one day the market there went on strike against the high cost of living, and the purchasers helped themselves at will, and there was no more market. After that catastrophe, the weekly trip of the farm truck was to Beauvais.

They represent conferences in Amiens over supply houses for seeds and trees, and more conferences in Paris with nurserymen. At one time gasoline failed for the tractor, in fact for all the tractors in the region. Then the farm department was told that it might have all the gasoline it could carry, by going for it to Havre! Transportation by rail had become clogged.

They represent unbounded energy, hard work and long hours given to a well loved task. They represent, too, the disinterested help of our farm assistants. There are Marie Pottier and her soldier husband returned from the war. Faithful morning and night at the milking is Marie. Her husband rejoices in driving our tractor and guiding our plow. There is Demaison, a protégé of the Mayor

of Hombleux, and caretaker of the second estate of importance in the village these many years. He was a prisoner in Belgium in 1917. But to see him now, never ruffled, always willing and always dependable, one would think



"EACH IN HER TURN"

him without a care. He has no care which he puts before the interests of the farm and his place therein. Were the Dames called away by stress of events, Demaison took charge, and that with a good sense equaling his good will. No cajoling housewife got the better of him. "Each in her turn, each in her turn, Madame," his calm voice rose above the most

congested of pig markets in our barnyard, and his strong arms enforced law. His ally and ours on these great occasions was M. Guy, the cow merchant of Vannes. After a week's trip, it might be, in a freight car with cows or pigs or goats, M. Guy would appear from the direction of Nesle, a trifle soiled, but with the courtliest of hat doffing and the suavest of greetings, announcing the arrival of his wares. No respite for him; after a garrulous breakfast, he assisted in the bringing up of his flocks and his herds, and became the presiding genius of the sale. Where the clamor was loudest, and the press of purchasers greatest, there was M. Guy, Panama hat pushed back from his semitic face, black smock enveloping his sturdy form. And above the clamor, his voice, mellifluous, convincing, "The little white pig? You have the eyes, Madame. There, in your apron, one moment. What a sweet face he has!"

## CHAPTER XI

### LIFE AMONG THE RUINS

**B**UT reconstruction means much more to the French Government than agricultural or industrial or material rebuilding. On the shattered walls of village hills, overlapping the proclamations of the Prefecture in regard to housing, on the doors of the country churches, one finds affixed such posters as: PUPILLES DE LA NATION. La France adopte les orphalins dont le père, la mère ou le soutien de famille a péri, au cours de la guerre de 1914, victime militaire ou civile de l'ennemi." By the law of July 27, 1917, these children, so priceless in the face of the 3,000,000 soldiers killed, become the wards of France, to be reared and educated according to their aptitudes and deserts. Supplementing this Government service is another, semi-public in character, called L'École pour l'École. The

public schools of France, whose rôle throughout the war has been one of distinguished patriotism, have taken it upon themselves to supply the needs of their brother students in the devastated area. Thus each department has been adopted by one or more academies, our own department of the Somme by the Academy of Toulouse. All this, it will be understood, is being done in addition to the liberal system of scholarships administered as usual by the State and by the several departments.

The impetus of this intellectual and moral reconstruction was felt by us as it had not been in the pioneer days of 1917. There was no longer any question as to the utility of libraries, for example, compared with woolen underwear. Both were needed, and in the eyes of the State, both were equally important. The book would keep the child out of very real mischief, for not only were the fields sown with unexploded shells; shells and hand grenades by the thousand were scattered along the roads, in underground shelters—and where is the boy who would not explore them?—and in



great dumps, just as they had been left by the fleeing enemy. The army, with its squads of German prisoners, was eternally busy removing these menaces, and not a day went by without its series of detonations and its columns of smoke thrown high against the horizon. But there again was danger from flying fragments. Half a dozen children in our villages lost eyes or hands, and one, the only son of a widowed mother, was burned to death, in accidents of this sort.

Because we were on the spot, we were asked to compile the list of the mutilated children of our neighborhood, who stood in need of vocational instruction. We recommended children as beneficiaries of the fund raised by the American soldiers for the children of France through the *Stars and Stripes*. Thanks to special donations, we have cared for four little orphans ourselves. We kept our shoulder to the sorely tried machinery of government, and it is not too much to say that we forced public attention at least and hastened the opening of our schools. The first to start, in April, 1919,

were those of Esmerly-Hallon, Sancourt and Brouchy. For these schools and all the schools as they opened, we provided so far as obtainable equipment of tables, benches, stoves, blackboards and books. In all of them we instituted once more the sewing hour, the play hour, games and gymnastics once a week. To each village as our library grew, we sent a collection of books, which was exchanged every fortnight. From time to time, parties for all the children within reaching distance were given again at Grécourt. At the first of these, in March, we had one hundred and fifty happy guests.

The teachers of our schools, it should be said, needed no urging. From captivity, from exile, from the colors, the teachers, the same teachers of before the war, came back to the villages. But not all; two at least are inscribed in the "Book of Gold" contained in the Report of the Préfet for 1919. "Tué à l'ennemi, Mellier, instituteur à Hombleux; mort de suite de sa blessure, Duwequet, instituteur-adjoint à Hombleux." No praise can be too

great of the devotion and intelligence of these teachers: M. Caron of Esmery-Hallon who on his demobilization rejoined his wife, also a teacher; M. Lefebvre of Sancourt who stuck to his post throughout the German occupation; M. Petit of Brouchy who on the contrary was taken as a hostage by the enemy in 1914; M. Didaux of Douilly who was an exile and taught school in Ercheu until his own baraque was at last ready, perched like a vane on that bare and windy hill; M. Devillers of Eppeville who himself begged most of his equipment, or gave it out of his slender purse.

Our help from the teachers meant more than it would have in America, where one is wont to say that the teacher is a social cipher. In France the primary teacher is a power in the community. He is always secretary to the mayor, and in the mayor's absence acts for him. There is no one except perhaps the curé who knows his neighborhood as does he. Nor are he and the curé at cross purposes. The separation of church and state, in our districts at least, has not dissolved the strong bonds be-

tween church and school. "Very catholic" are the teachers as well as the peasants of our corner of Picardy.

It was when we launched our campaign of public health in the villages that we appreciated most the knowledge and good will of our teachers. We were fortunate in having as the head of this branch of our work, the former director of rural Red Cross nursing in America, and also in having as her assistant an English war nurse, trained in Paris and speaking French like a native. She carried into the dingy Somme an exotic charm of personality, for she was born on Cyprus and her mother was a Greek. Our physician, Dr. Anna M. Gove, was, like Miss Griffin, not an alumna of Smith College. But no alumna could have been more loyal, or have rendered more disinterested service.

The medical situation in our community was canvassed. At Nesle and at Ham there were stationed two army doctors charged with the care of civilians. But they had inadequate transportation; up to September, 1919, the

doctor at Ham had no automobile at his disposal. They lacked instruments and medicines. In particular, they had no equipment for confinement cases, and most of them—for the military doctor was a transitory quantity—no experience in this line. In France, it is the sage-femme who usually attends these cases. There was one sage-femme, also without means of transportation, at Ham.

As for hospitals, the civilian foundations at Ham and at Nesle had been partially ruined and totally stripped. The sisters, who nursed, were still in exile. Meantime, military hospitals took civilian cases until they moved away. During the summer of 1919, there was a period of two months when Ham had not even a physician. But happily by this time a former physician at Nesle had been demobilized and resumed his practice, and the Hospice at Nesle had been put in order and the sisters had been reinstalled. We ourselves used these hospitals and the very complete and efficient plant of the American Women's Hospitals at Blérancourt.

The first care of our medical staff was to put itself at the disposal of the local physicians and the midwife. Instruments and medicines and hospital supplies were given, and transportation as often as possible. Thus practical coöperation was effected. No objection was raised to our free dispensaries, a system which dovetailed into that of the public charities of each commune, whereby the country practitioner is paid a yearly stipend for the care of the indigent. Since the war, he is also paid a salary and assisted in replacing his losses by special grants from the State. The physician therefore welcomed us as allies in covering his difficult field.

As in 1917, dispensaries were held weekly in the distant villages, and three times a week at Grécourt. A complete physical examination of all school children was started, and one hundred cases of adenoids and tonsils were taken to Blérancourt and returned therefrom in our cars. The dental clinics were held at first once a week at Grécourt, and were as popular as the pig sales. Five years without



dental care, and in many instances a lifetime without a toothbrush, brought a plentiful harvest. Dr. DeL. Kinney of Blérancourt Hospital worked tirelessly and skillfully and followed up her pulling clinics with others devoted to repairs. Chairs were brought out and placed in the shade of the big plane tree for expectant patients, who included the quality of the countryside. During the winter, Dr. Kinney's entire time was given to our villages.

The public health nurses meantime made a house-to-house survey of living conditions, paying particular attention to wells and outhouses. The findings in Esmerly-Hallon, our largest village, are typical. Of ninety-six shelters, housing nearly five hundred souls, half were without outhouses, and two thirds without wells. Most of the wells in use had been cleaned, however, but none had been analyzed. The sanitary condition speaks for itself. The results of this survey were given by request to the mayor, who transmitted recommendations based on them to the Prefecture. The latter was most willing to sup-



ply lumber and disinfectants. But three months later, it was through a donation from the Vassar Unit that we were able to secure enough lumber for model outhouses, and it was in our cars that disinfectants were brought from Amiens and distributed.

Throughout the spring, the nurses registered and visited prenatal cases which were on the increase with the return of the men to their families. But while our nurses gave prenatal and postnatal care, the confinements were in the care of the midwife at Ham. She was consulted and aided to the best of our ability, and in turn notified us of every new case coming to her. This plan worked admirably, except that there should have been more midwives. The patients themselves were intelligent and receptive. Supplementary feeding, systematic weighing, hints on hygiene, all were well received.

In fact, the monthly reports of the medical department show that our community was a remarkably healthy one. The predicted after-battle epidemics did not sweep over us, the

overcrowding, the insanitation of summer, the cold of winter, claimed comparatively few victims. Our school inspection brought out the fact that our children are undersized compared to those of Paris. This might point to malnutrition were it not offset by the fact that they average overweight. The older people too have demonstrated a surprising resiliency since the depressing winter of 1917. Happiness is the best of tonics, and each reunited family in its bit of a ruin was pitifully happy to be at home.

During the summer, health clubs for the children were started in the villages. A better description of their purpose and of their popularity could not be given than that contained in the report of the secretary of the club at Verlaines at its second meeting, September 3, 1919. Simone is a war orphan, fifteen years of age, a slender brunette with ruffled curls and shy brown eyes. There were eighteen present at this open air reunion under a shady tree.

“Since January, 1919, when I returned to

my native place, from which the enemy had driven me by his acts of horror in burning our farms and our houses, I have seen once or twice a week the brave and devoted American ladies going about everywhere among our ruins, informing themselves as to the unfortunates who were returning to their destroyed homes. To come to their aid, they brought a bed, a mattress, clothing to meet their greatest need.

"Thanks to them, gayety has returned to our saddened young faces; now there is the *ronde*, there is the football, there is the sewing. Oh, how good these days seemed to us, and how quickly they passed! On the twenty-seventh of August, it was to form a club of hygiene that they called us together. What good fortune; we had need of it, the war having deprived us of it of necessity.

"They quickly called to order the gathering of children and explained to them how the club would be formed; those who were received as members of this club would wear on one side a little pin in the form of a shield.

In the middle would be written: Health. They distributed to each a leaflet on which the twelve commandments of health were written, and they explained them to us.

“They made us choose a president, a vice-president and a secretary.

President, Roger Rossignol.

Vice-President, Paul Dethouy.

Secretary, Simone Vicaine.

“We three retired to one side, and the twenty-four members of the club gave their names to the Secretary.

“Then they gave some little leaflets to the Secretary to distribute to each of the members of the club, and recommended that they read them at home.

“They distributed some brushes and paste for the care of our teeth. The President rose and told us that the meeting was over, but that it would reconvene next Wednesday. After that the crowd followed along toward a building, and there the American ladies nailed

up three great posters very necessary to the inhabitants of the commune.

"The American lady photographed the group.



A.P.G.

"THEY DISTRIBUTED BRUSHES AND PASTE"

"And with that we dismissed the party for a week.

"And we all went away content."

By such patient beginnings was the way paved for the large program we had in view, of public health committees to be elected by the villages themselves and federated and allied to the Department of Hygiene of the

Prefecture of the Somme. Much tact was necessary, particularly after Dr. Gove was called to America. Professional welfare nurses are almost unknown in France. For centuries, it is the sisters who have been the nurses of the poor, until the disestablishment of the Church in 1907. Hence there was no tradition to build upon in establishing coöperation between the rural physician and the rural nurse.

The first meeting called to consider the formation of a committee of public health was held in the stable of the Mayor of Buvérchy. There were present the Mayor, his wife, his daughter, the Mayor of Grécourt and two nurses of the Smith College Unit. Their seats were plank benches rescued from the former French encampment in the town; their feet rested on the earth; through the open door—the only means of light and air—passed from time to time an inquiring duck or hen, to be shooed softly out by the young girl. But no more intelligent nor sympathetic counsel could have been given than that of these four



peasants. They comprehended, they approved, they named the public spirited citizens of their diminutive communes, and suggested, as a practical measure, that the committee be composed in each case of an odd number, in order that action be not blocked. In that poor Buverchy, where even the dead were disinterred by the battles of 1918, public moneys are available for the carrying on of this work, and besides, said M. Carpentier, simply, "while there will be those in our commune who cannot give money, they will give the gift of the heart. They will do anything they can to help, visit and care for the sick." It was this same Mayor who wrote one day to us: "It is thanks to you that we now have our barnyards full of fowls of all kinds, of rabbits, of sheep, of pigs, cows, etc.—which we enjoy and which cause us to forget our evil days—it is thanks to you too that we have our houses garnished with beds, linen, dishes, kitchen ware, furniture, in short everything indispensable for housekeeping!" What a picture as one looks about his hovel, a picture at least of



gratitude. Surely with such mayors, there is no limit to the good we ought to be able to do.

By November, the committees had been organized in our villages and federated and in addition an advisory committee appointed which includes all the doctors and the heads of sanitary corps in Ham and Nesle, influential citizens and representatives of neighboring relief societies. The official recognition of the departmental Service d'Hygiène has been won. Dr. Lacomme, the head of the service, is himself addressing public meetings to explain our plan to the community and the wife of the Préfet is the chairman of the advisory committee.

For this rural nursing, though begun and financed by us, must eventually be taken over by the French. This transfer is also in accord with the plans of the French Government. In April, 1919, a notable departure in the public health service was launched by the Ministry of the Liberated Regions. To each of the prefectures of the devastated departments was

sent a woman delegate, called an Inspectrice, charged with the duty of investigating not only sanitary conditions, but all private relief agencies within the department. She is answerable directly to the Préfet, but is herself appointed on the recommendation of the director of a newly created bureau of the Ministry. This director is a woman. It is hoped that this bureau, interested in public health, especially as it concerns child welfare, will eventually absorb the functions of all private societies in the devastated area, into a public health service of the State. Rural nurses, school nurses and social workers are envisaged in this earnest effort to save the children of France. Already the École de Puericulture to train such workers, endowed by the University of Paris, the City of Paris, and the American Red Cross, has been opened in Paris. Its plant is the Edith Cavell Hospital, its sponsor the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Paris. Upon its board of directors, the director of the inspectors representing the Ministry of the Liberated Regions has a place. She

is well known to the Smith Unit, as is the Inspector of the Somme. But she herself says: "Wait. This is a new venture for women. You may tell of our work, yes, but not our names. We must guard them for all suspicion of notoriety."

## CHAPTER XII

### COMMUNITY PLANNING

**T**HE taking over by the Government of all forms of reconstruction, social, moral and material, will if feasible sound the knell of organized private effort. Twenty-five years, it is estimated, will be required to rebuild the life of Northern France. So stupendous a task can only be undertaken by the Government. According to the terms of the Treaty, it will be financed by Germany.

France has definite ideas at which she is aiming in her reconstruction; she has many experiments to be tried out in the Région Libérée. The basis of most of them is a principle antagonistic to the deep seated individualism of the farmer, dependent only within the memory of men not yet old upon common effort, such as factories, for the necessities of life. Fifty years ago, yes, twenty-five years

ago, the Picard farm was self-supporting, independent, feudal. Now on every hand the farmer hears: "Form associations, make a union, own your machinery in common, work your fields in common. It is the only way in which you can survive." And he is doing it. The priests, unable to return to ruined parishes, revive the monastic community, and serve their parishes from this center. There are coöperative stores and coöperatives of reconstruction. No man builds to himself these days; the plans for the entire village pass for approval through the hands of legally constituted authorities on sanitation and construction. The very soul of the village is to become composite.

At least, such is the trend of events mirrored in the Congrès Interallié d'Hygiène Sociale held in Paris in April, 1919. At about the same time there came to us the following recommendation from the High Commission for the Coördination of Relief: "Le Conseil Supérieur de l'Office National de Coördination des Secours rappelle aux villes étrangères

et françaises, aux bienfaiteurs étrangers et français qui, de toutes parts, demandent, comme un honneur, de participer à la reconstitution de nos régions libérées, que la charge pécuniaire de cette reconstitution que l'État français assume intégralement incombe à nos ennemis qui les ont dévastées et émet le voeu que toute la propagande nécessaire soit faite pour que les générosités amies qui s'offrent pour cette reconstitution s'emploient à doter nos départements libérés, villes et campagnes, de foyers semblables aux Maisons communes anglo-saxonnes, centres d'hygiène et de saines distractions pour l'amélioration physique et morale de la race si durement éprouvée par l'invasion, 'Foyers de la Victoire' qui pourraient devenir pour chaque cité renaissante, grande ou petite, à la fois le musée local de la guerre et le monument élevé à la Mémoire de ses Héros."

This community center is well described in detail by Mlle. Louise Compain, in her patriotic pamphlet, "La Grand' Pitié des Campagnes de France."

“Next to the church, and not in opposition to it (it too will live as long as men have need of its aid, and will transform itself slowly with this very need) the democratic state ought to raise the House of the People, where through the eyes, through the spoken word and through actions will be achieved the culture of the heart. This house, of which we are going to explain in general the appearance and basic functions, was not born of our imagination; the shores of the Pacific knew it in young America. To these hardy peoples who exploit a new soil, it brings the bread of the spirit and the joy of art. Europe and France are ignorant of it as yet. Nevertheless, for our people, inured to contact with an old land, why should it not serve also as the center of light and of beauty, the attraction of which would hold them to the place of their toil, which would thus become easier and happier?

“We shall now attempt a description of it:

“On the ground floor, shower baths, dispensary, consultation room for nursing mothers. All the trifling ills from which infants



and parents suffer, maladies of the eyes, chilblains, felons are cared for here, and here too is found advice to guide mothers in the care of the newly born. On the second story, attractive rooms for lectures and for clubs. The library is amply provided with books which do not all treat of agriculture. There can be found our best poets, biographies of heroes of character and of science, histories, some novels. The newspapers kept on the table are picked for their diverse opinions. The conferences which are given in the adjoining room, treat of different subjects also. Some contribute to the knowledge of agriculture or of housekeeping, others to the art of living, others simply to the amusement of the audience. The House for Every One, or House of Social Life, or Neighborhood House (the name matters little) possesses a good apparatus for moving pictures. Thanks to that, it gives exhibits where one travels in foreign countries, or marvels at assisting in the phenomena of daily life, like the sprouting of a tree, or the growth of a chick in the egg. This

apparatus serves too to illustrate by examples social subjects broached here and up to this time carefully excluded from our public instruction. Is coöperation spoken of? One visits in England and in Belgium the factories which teach at Manchester the collective genius of our English friends, or at Gand the initiative genius of an Anseele. Is a new law about to be enacted by Parliament? It is explained, discussed, commented on at the House. In this way, all the misunderstandings which gave rise to that in regard to workmen's pensions are dissipated and the full effect of the law is gained. Gatherings for diversion alternate with these gatherings for study. There is singing, there are plays, a little theatrical company is formed. But above all, the House becomes a place of assembly, of joyous and happy assemblies, where discussions occur without coarseness, where the "night-owls" find the attraction of reading and of conversations in common. It is the hearth of the village. Those who as little children form the habit of passing their

hours of leisure in these pleasant rooms, will always return to them. It will transform rural life and, little by little, the rural spirit.

“For this House will not be simply an organism; erected to act upon souls, it will have a soul, that of the social educator responsible for guiding and vivifying it. Formed by travel, by extensive reading, pupils too of a higher normal school of the people yet to be created, these men and these women are truly missionaries who go about their own countryside, carrying to the disinherited of the soil the good news of beauty for every one and of genuine civilization. Next door to this instructress (I have an idea that the Neighborhood House will be directed most frequently by a woman of large and adaptive spirit and maternal heart) a visiting nurse will also live. In the morning she is found in the dispensary. Once that service is completed, she sets out on her bicycle and goes to give that care to the sick which the doctor of the region has indicated. It is she who does the cupping, lancing and bandaging for those patients who can-

not come in the morning. These cares are of a material kind; very quickly she becomes an adviser, a friend, the purveyor of indispensable hygiene."

It is interesting for us as Americans to note the source of this idea of a community center, which Mlle. Compain elsewhere states to be the American public library. Would that we had more of them in our own rural communities! Credit is sometimes given to the American Red Cross and sometimes to the Young Men's Christian Association for demonstrating the success of such centers in the Foyers du Soldat, and after the Armistice in Foyers Civils.

At all events, the community center being the recommendation of the French Government, and the first constructive suggestion of importance given by it to private agencies, it became our object to realize it. There could have been no plan which would so well have perpetuated the type of social work we were doing; we had the library, the cinema, the gymnastic classes, the public health nurses

and the dispensary. In short, we had at Grécourt from the beginning a social settlement. All that was asked of us now was to house our work in a more or less permanent structure, to endow it and eventually to turn it over to France. This was to be our contribution to reconstruction, in a field untouched by Government aid so far, but sanctioned by the Government, and destined to become in time a subsidized public work.

The intelligent public opinion of the Somme was back of this enterprise. The Secours d'Urgence had already opened a foyer at Roye, and the French Red Cross another at Ham in a baraque which was the gift of the American Red Cross. The community of priests at Ham preached the gospel of the *Maison pour Tous* through all the villages. Most opportunely, the Prefecture advocated in earnest language a campaign against alcoholism. "Of all the problems of our epoch, the most important, the most grave, as it is the most disquieting for the future of France, is, without contradiction, that of re-

population. . . . In the field of economics in particular, which is the only one reviewed here, it is necessary in order to obtain production at moderate cost, to possess abundant and robust labor. Now before the war, there was already well-founded complaint throughout the domain of agriculture, of its rarity and equally of its inefficiency, in consequence of the lamentable effects of alcoholism which had come to add diminished strength to insufficient numbers.”\*

Before the war also, one deplored in the villages the vicious effects of *estaminets* and *cabarets* which sapped the old-time country virtues. In our region these were especially flourishing, for the Picard peasant has ever been a hard drinker, and the leading industry of our countryside had become the raising and distilling of the sugar beet. But the drink of the farmers still remained a cider of acrid flavor renowned for many centuries. With the cutting of the orchards and the destruction of presses, cider is scarcely procurable now,

\* Report of the Préfet, August, 1919.



nor was there a sugar beet distillery left in the Somme. Alcohol is therefore imported in the form of beers and of wines. The latter are high in price, and one hears on all sides, injuriously adulterated. Yet the consumption is on the increase; the estaminet or cabaret invariably opens in the best house in the village, or rather in the best houses; for the law allows one to every hundred inhabitants, and the inhabitants seem to be counted on a pre-war basis. With no other gathering place through the summer than the rustic wine garden, and none during the winter than the warm and lighted barroom, gay with barmaids' laughter, what wonder that the men, and the women too, drown for a time their discouragements?

It is in competition with these bars that the *Maison pour Tous* will be open night and day. Ours is located in Hombleux, which disputes with Esmery-Hallon the distinction of being the largest of our villages. It is said by some to have been the intellectual center of the neighborhood, although this assumption would be hotly contested in Esmery, and in



Canisy the folk of Hombleux are known to be great hypocrites. Against all this local rivalry and jealousy, we have had to feel our way.

In fact, we have had more than mere ideas to contend with in the raising of our roof-tree. In the first place, there was the land to be bought. A small but central location was offered us through the good offices of the mayor, on a corner of the main street, opposite a Calvary. But to acquire legal title to this land took six months, interspersed with trips to Amiens and a final dash to Compiègne. At last, however, we became landowners in the Somme. Meantime, we had been seeking for baraques. The Prefecture promised them, the American Red Cross promised them; in fact, they shipped them to us from Bordeaux. But baraques are among those unconsidered trifles which become lost in transit these days. None of them arrived. So, with German prisoners ready to level the ground, and a French detail from the prison camp ready to guard them, we had still at the beginning of Septem-

ber no baraque in sight. How we finally got one, from Verdun, is an extraordinary story, and our baraque had already had an extraordinary history. Put up by the American Army at Verdun, it was first occupied by our Negro troops. On leaving the sector, the Americans donated it to the Vassar Unit, which came in March to do rehabilitation work there. Under them, the baraque was used as a canteen for returning refugees. They turned their work over to the French the first of September, and bequeathed this baraque to us. To demount it, to load it onto cars, and to convoy it in the person of a soldier detailed from the garrison of Verdun for the purpose, took a week. It took also the united coöperation of our Unit, the Vassar Unit, the American Red Cross, the stationmaster and the French Army. That achievement is in its way a monument to the golden opinion won by the Vassar Unit at Verdun. The Smith Unit hopes that under its guardianship this glory may never grow less!

Our baraque, at length raised inch by inch

under the unwinking eye of the Unit, presents now a changed appearance to the world. Its weathered sides have been painted a cheerful yellow, its windows, whose green flower boxes await the spring, are already bright with cretonne. Within, the gray of walls and ceiling is in contrast with scarlet painted beams and woodwork. Here, twice a week, the cinema draws its spectators, here the meetings for the launching of the campaign of public health were held, here the curé celebrated the Christmas mass, and here the village band, provided by the Unit with instruments and music to replace those the Germans destroyed, is giving concerts which outdo the phonograph.

A building designed to be a permanent addition to the village supplements the Foyer proper. It is a composition bungalow, containing six rooms. Here are lodged the library and dispensary, and here will live the resident French workers, the director of the Foyer and the visiting nurses after we are gone. Our endowment will suffice for two years at least, and until the private societies



A BOY SCOUT

leave this field of rehabilitation, our work will be carried on under the Secours d'Urgence, best known by its first post of relief,—the first, in fact, to be established in the Liberated Regions,—at Roye. Mlle. Javal, Secretary of this organization, has an international reputation for her work on behalf of crippled French soldiers. Mme. Gory, who has been from the beginning the presiding genius of the post at Roye, will become the Directrice of our Foyer, and of our activities. Already beloved throughout the region, gracious, efficient, no more fortunate successor could have been found for the Smith College Unit, than Mme. Gory and the Secours d'Urgence.

In this plant which we leave to them, will center another activity as far-reaching, we venture to hope, as the health work; that of the Boy Scouts. This was organized by us in the fall of 1919 under the leadership of Mr. R. R. Miller, formerly scout master in France with the Young Men's Christian Association. Each of our villages now has its troop. But it is the hope of the International Boy Scouts

that these villages, thus organized on a non-sectarian basis, may form the nucleus of an organization which will embrace the entire devastated area, and eventually the whole of France. Back of these French boys, should they succeed, would stand the international body, and particularly those who have already achieved the most powerful organizations, their comrades, the Boy Scouts of England and of America.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE VILLAGE AND THE WAR

**A**MID the innovations of the present, the provisional house built of wood—itsself an anachronism in a land long deforested—the tractor in place of white-yoked oxen, the McCormick binder, the mechanical sower in place of “La Semeuse,” it seems as if the life of the past had fallen to ruin as surely as the houses of brick and wattle and the sentinel churches above them. Is it then unworthy or impossible of preservation, that life of before the war? Is there anything that we as a community center should do to preserve or restore it? At least we should understand what the social fabric was which the war destroyed.

Primitive it certainly was, and simple, and yet progressing with the progress of the times. In fact the country as we know it dates only from the Revolution. Then it was that the



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châteaux and the rich monasteries fell a prey to their former vassals, and then that for the first time the peasant became the arbiter of his person and the owner of his lands. This stir of change is apparent in a quaint description of our region contained in the "*Histoire de la Ville de Roye*" written by Grégoire d'Essigny, fils, and published at Noyon just a hundred years ago. "The inhabitants of our plains of Picardy," we read, "have nothing that distinguishes them from the usual French type; as to physique, the men are robust, the women, above all the young ones, have something pleasing about them,—in fact, villages can even be recalled where they are pretty as a rule; the Picard patois sometimes borrows grace from their lips.

"The French Revolution has brought among them a luxury which they never had before. In olden times, one used to see them take from their wardrobes on the days of great fêtes, the suit which they had for their marriage. It was usually of a grayish white stuff, cut very long skirted, with large pockets, and

with buttons down the entire length, on the tabs of the pockets, and at the cuff. To-day our villagers desire their suits made in the latest mode, and of fine material; they add to them an elegant waistcoat, silver buckles at knee and at instep, and a French hat beautifully turned. (I am speaking of those who are in easy circumstances and of the costume which they wear on Sundays and fête-days.) The dresses of the women are not less affected: beautiful caps of muslin embroidered in wide folds, neckerchief of the same material, bodice and skirt of lovely chintz, with an apron of red India lawn or of black silk, a heavy cross and earrings of gold."

Alas! our peasants of to-day dress more soberly, but they have lost their distinctive costumes for the same reason; they too follow the fashions of the city in their Sunday best. But if their dress has deteriorated, their housing has improved. Our villages of substantial brick, of massive gateways, of patterned gables, of red-tiled roofs, were unknown a hundred years ago. In 1818, "earth, wood and

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straw or thatch suffice almost always for the construction of the cottages of our plains. The door, quite often, serves also as window; the area is almost never paved; sometimes it is made of brick, frequently it is merely earth, and not level at that."

Rustic fare was much the same as now. "When they can buy a pig, they fatten it and corn it; it is the chief part of their nourishment." Yet our author painstakingly notes that Picardy is perhaps the province of France where the most bread is eaten. "It is beautiful there, good and abundant. Their dinner and their supper," he continues, "consist principally of vegetables. Peas, string beans, kidney beans, potatoes, cabbage, turnips, are what they live on ordinarily. They eat a deal of soup, which is made with the vegetables and the pork; this diet is sensible and gives them strength. Our villagers drank formerly water, cider or beer. The relaxation of manners since the Revolution has multiplied in the country the number of those houses where a man comes to lose his powers through the

abuse of wine, and often to ruin at the same time his health and his purse."

For unknown centuries, the farmers have grouped themselves in villages, isolated farms, except manorial estates, being rare. These villages in Picardy are very compact, for the reasons that land is valuable, and that it is parceled out to successive descendants. A contemporary village of the plains, then, recalls no such picture of cottages embowered in orchards, or half hidden by hedges, as one may see in more hilly or less broadly cultivated parts of France. It stretches often along an old Roman road, and presents flush with the street, doorsteps or shallow gardens, high walls, cavernous gates, and the sloping roofs of enormous granges where, not so many years ago, the harvest of wheat was threshed as well as stored. The gate opens into a square court, which is usually the barnyard. Within, each farmer is master of an integral domain.

The village church, in old times the nucleus of the village, more often than not forms an obstruction to the comparatively modern streets.

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In such a village, "at the entrance to the church, surrounded by a wall, is found the an-



A TOWERED DOVE-COTE—BUVERCHY

cient cemetery, where sleep their last sleep more than twelve generations of ancestors.

. . . Facing the square, one admires the splendid schoolhouse. On the right of the entrance is found the lodging of the instructor, on the left, that of the instructress. The two classes [boys and girls], as indicated by the separate lodgings, are separated by a wall. A beautiful great garden, well planted, completes this magnificent property.

“On the first floor, giving on a balcony, is the office of the mayor. There is located also a town library containing serious works. It is there that the municipal council meets for its important deliberations, the bureau of charities, the tax-collector on the day appointed, the mutual benefit society, etc.

“At the opposite end of the square is seen the attractive structure for the fire brigade; in the wings of this, two pretty chambers for poor travelers in search of free lodgings.

“Near the church . . . one remarks a superb square planted along its edges with great lindens beneath which are placed at regular intervals benches for their tired admirers.”\*

\*E. Maurisse: *Monographie Illustrée de Mons-en-Chaussée*.

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Here on Sunday afternoons, the village bands were wont to play. Here was held each month the village fair, and here each year on the fête days of the village saint, the booths of petty merchants spread like mushrooms, and the strains of the merry-go-round made discord with the violins that called to the village dance.

One of our villages, Esmery-Hallon, was the possessor of a merry-go-round which not only served its own fêtes, but toured the fêtes of the countryside. It is to be doubted, however, if any of these were as *recherché* as Esmery's own, held in July for three days in honor of St. Vaneng. This saint of the seventh century was the founder of a monastery in Normandy whence the incursions of the Northmen drove the monks. They brought the relics of their saint to Esmery. To this day, after many vicissitudes, they repose there in the little gymnastic hall of the village now used as a church. In this same hall, with fragments of old wood carving and mutilated statues, is another relic of medieval life, the crimson banner of St. Sebastian, patron of arch-



ery. Nor is it inappropriate that the church should have found shelter in the gymnasium, nor that the sole remaining banner of the Company of Archers of Esmery-Hallon should float above the relics of St. Vaneng. In this most catholic Picardy, sports are under the patronage of the Church, from the Company of Archers with its five hundred years of history behind it, to the gymnastic society "La Valliante" founded by a schoolboy of the village for his former playmates under the patronage of M. le Curé in 1911.

In the *Annuaire-Général du Département de la Somme* of 1913, which gives the resources of each commune, Esmery-Hallon is thus listed: Esmery-Hallon, 903 inhabitants, canton of Ham, distant 6 kilometers; postoffice and railroad at Ham; telegraph, telephone; Fête patronale, the third Sunday of July; annual fair, September 22. Then follows the list of dignitaries: the mayor, the municipal councilors, the secretary, the curé, the four teachers, the tax collector, the town crier, the Company of *Pompriers*, or volunteer fire bri-

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gade, and the Company of Archers. Hombleux could add to this list another ancient company, her *fanfare*, or village band.

It was Charles the Seventh who, in 1448, first organized the companies of archers as a branch of his army. Their meets were for the yeoman what the tourneys were for the knights. In order to be eligible, then as now, the candidate for the very noble and high sport of archery must be of good life and honest conversation. Then, every parish of fifty hearths throughout France was bound to furnish such a man for the King's army. To-day, the sport is confined to Northern France, where in 1914, there were ten thousand archers still wielding the bow. The companies in our villages, of which there are three, have thirty members each. Near the cemetery, usually, is the *jardin au tir*, or shooting ground, where the approved target is a paraquet or nightingale carved in wood. Here on Sunday afternoons practice the members of the company, and here are held meets between villages, or if the commune is wealthy and important

enough, a yearly meet for all the companies of the Federation, called the *Bouquet Provincial*. At this event, a notable of the department serves as President of Honor, and Monseigneur the Bishop assists at the ceremony. Many prizes are distributed, and he who wins the grand prize is the King of the Archers for the ensuing year.

In Esmery, in Hombleux, and in Brouchy are to be found to-day the presidents of these companies of archers. But alas! the Germans have destroyed every bow and arrow; the uniforms, the banners, the targets, all are lost. The secretary at Esmery shows with pride a proclamation of a meet in the Oise in 1908, which he had saved among his buried treasures. "The companies shall arrive," begins this proclamation, "in good order, drum beating and banners deployed." It was all he had left of the annals of his company. A like destruction befell the musical instruments, which the Germans requisitioned and melted up, so that to the silence of the village bells, those loquacious chroniclers of village life, has been

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added the silence of the bands. Offoy, Brouchy and Hombleux had such organizations, averaging, like the companies of archers, thirty members each. They were encouraged by the *grands cultivateurs* who subscribed an amount sufficient to cover the cost of instruments. Hombleux also had a choral society of boys and girls, trained by her gifted and public spirited curé. Nor must it be thought that those villages not having bands or archery meets of their own were necessarily less progressive. Douilly, Sancourt, Muille-Villette, appertained in culture to Ham, with its Company of Archers, its theater and its philharmonic. The same was true of our villages neighboring Nesle.

Economically, our villages were well off before the war. The wheat of a hundred years ago had not yet yielded first place to the sugar beet; the fertility of the land was unimpaired. One main line railroad, one of narrow gauge running through the market gardens, and two canals supplied transportation through Amiens, Noyon and St. Quentin to more distant

centers. The sugar beet had brought in three distilleries and one refinery; at Esmery were a brewery and a pottery, and at Offoy a flour mill of the first class. There was a telegraph or a telephone in five of the villages, and electric lighting in an equal number radiating from Ham. Almost every one, everywhere, owned some land, if only a garden. Canisy, Offoy and Eppeville grew opulent on their market produce; of larger farms there were about a hundred and fifty. One of these, that of Lannoy, employed three hundred hands. As the teacher of Sancourt writes of his own commune: "Favored by a fertile soil, and progress aiding them, the population, very hard working, are always attached to the soil, and enriched by it. In 1914, thanks to the installation of electricity, almost every house had its current, certain farms used electric power, the streets themselves were lighted. In a word, this little commune was heading more and more toward progress, toward good fortune, man making use of the gifts of science, when

unhappily there broke out this horrible catastrophe, the war."

And yet, so tenacious here are the customs of the ancestors, that one could perhaps find no better description of home life on the small farm than that given in the history of Roye already quoted: "The cultivation of the land is the principal occupation of the inhabitants of our countryside. The fields are fertile. Every one toils. The men work, sow, harvest, stack, thresh and sell the grain; the women clear the fields of harmful weeds. They may be seen, any day in summer, carrying on their backs a load of these plants which they give to the cattle.

"In the good season, the air echoes continually with the shrill songs of these gatherers of herbs; they set their voices at the highest pitch, and yet these voices are not always without some harmony. They sing the old tales or Picard ballads, charmingly naïve. . . .

"In the winter, when the earth is stripped of its verdure, and when one can no longer



gather greens, . . . in the winter evenings, called watches, when the women of Picardy spin the flax, there is presented a spectacle truly picturesque. It is cold; the days are short; the night begins to fall; several families gather together in a room or in a cellar. There can be seen maidens, each with her wheel before her, her lover leaning on the back of her chair. In time to the turning wheel, each person narrates what he knows; the stories which pass from father to son are recounted. All eyes are fixed on the narrator and reflect the greatest interest. Often, to make a diversion, the sharp voices of the young villagers strike up together an old tune, or sing a carol.

“If among the men present at this gathering, there chance to be some soldier on leave, you will hear him speak in pompous terms of the campaigns which he has made; you will see him too trace in chalk the camps upon the walls.”

One might add to this idyll, the twentieth-century picture drawn by M. l'Abbé Maurisse of his parishioners in a village only a few miles



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from ours: "This locality is inhabited by a substantial race of cultivators and their farm hands who have not degenerated in the least from their ancestors. Look at these good and energetic masters; look also at these servants driving their heavy carts, or seated upon their harvesters like kings upon their throne, or watering their horses; see these hands spread the fertilizer, hoe the poppies and the sugar beets; on Sunday and above all on fête days, see them at church, or in the afternoon at tennis, and in the evening at the cabaret. They converse, and the discourse is rude, the phrasing brusque, the word not at all shy of the thing, the buoyant gayety a little gallic, the repartee modest, and the invective energetic,—behold such are our rustics. . . . They have, none the less, imprinted on their features, courage and kindness. Has it not been said that under the hat of a peasant is often found the counsel of a prince?"\*

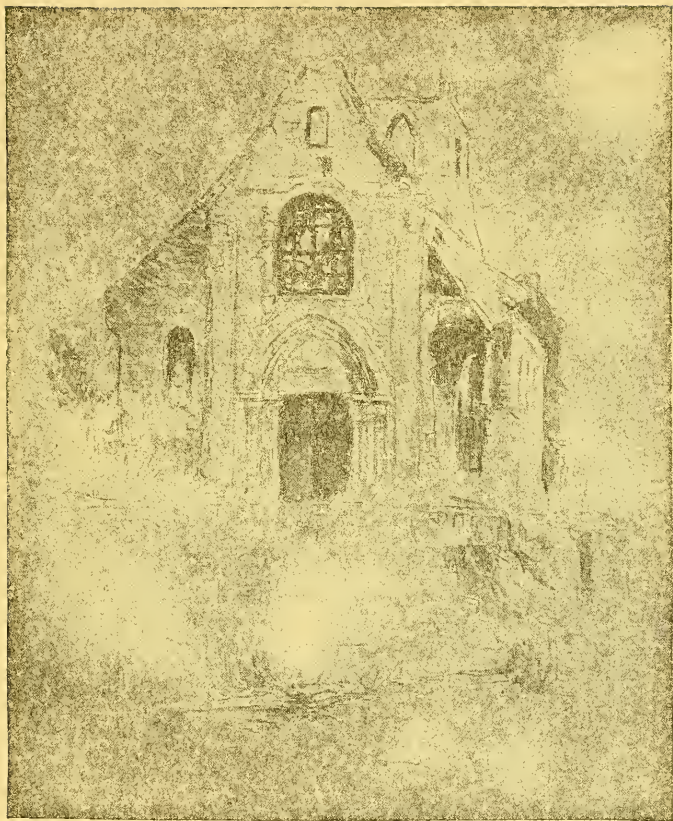
\*E. Maurisse: *Monographie Illustrée de Mons-en-Chaussée*.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE VILLAGE AND THE FUTURE

**E**VEN more important for us as agents of rehabilitation is it to understand the methods used to destroy, and the effect of the destruction, of this social life of Northern France. What of the morale? In what temper do the thrice-tried refugees face the realities of reconstruction, and how will it mold their future? If we know that, we shall know how to continue for their good the influence of the "new little Smith College" we sent in 1917 to the Somme.

From the door of his ruined home, the teacher of Sancourt looked across to the ruined church. A camionette belonging to the Unit was drawn up in the irregular little square. He had just brought out a basketful of books from the tiny school baraque, to be exchanged, and stood a minute talking. "Yes," he was



"THE RUINED CHURCH"

saying, "our church was built in the thirteenth century. The Germans took away the bells in February, 1917. Before that, they used to ring for German victories. No, Sancourt has not suffered so much, only six of her soldiers killed, and property destroyed. But it is morally that we have endured the greatest losses: the pealing of those bells, the privation of no news from our families, from our soldiers, the humiliations which the enemy inflicted, repeated summons, forced labor, fines, confiscation of crops, carrying away of civilians as prisoners, and to crown all, the burning of our village and all that it contained."

From the Baron de Thézy of Lannoy and Breuil, from Hombleux and Buverchy, from all our villages one hears the same estimate of the common loss. It was the soul of the community, as well as its body, that the Germans had aimed to destroy. In Hombleux, after recounting their many hardships, even to the taking of their curé as a hostage, the most poignant lament is for the carillon of the church, "poor émigrés." "Sound, Anne,

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Marie, Pélagie," writes the curé's sister, calling the bells by their baptismal names, "sound the last note for all those whom thou hast gathered in this way to baptism, and conducted to the grave. Sound for all the times that thou hast sung and for all the hopes that thou hast blessed!"

The Mayor of Buverchy says: "The hamlet of Buverchy, the ancient site of the city of Caletot, will rise anew . . . but it is not in it to recover its old time habits of gayety, to fête its Patron at Assumption in its chapel of Notre Dame de Lourdes, to-day entirely demolished amid its graves and tombs overthrown by shells."

This same Mayor of Buverchy was himself a hostage in the north of France and in Belgium. His wife, who became mayor in his place, contrasted one day the flight of the village in 1917 and in 1918. "In 1917, one had more, one was taken away in a wagon and could save a little linen, not much, but some pieces of good linen, and I my husband's records. I would rather have lost everything of

my own than those papers. But in 1918,—fancy,—one got away on foot. There were those who had sons, or a horse, but I had only my daughter of thirteen. I started with her and a wheelbarrow. On it were the town records.

“You remember M.—?” (a suspected spy, who had disputed the office of mayor with her). “*He* had three horses of his own and besides that the horse and wagon allotted to the village. (He had not been home two days before he got that away from me.) He saved everything, as in 1914, all his bedding, his mattresses, his linen, his furniture. And never a place for any of us. I went to him to ask if I could put the town records in the cart, the cart, mind you, that belonged to all the commune. ‘Madame,’ he said, ‘what would you? The cart is full; save them yourself!’ I have told this to several people, and they told me to write to M. le Préfet,—but I am only a country woman, I have not written.

“So, I put the papers on the wheelbarrow, and asked the English soldiers along the road



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to help me. But all the lorries were loaded,—they could not help. I walked to Rosières; at Rosières I turned toward Guillaucourt. Every one said, 'Trains no longer running; turn back.' I met M. le Sous-préfet; he said the same, 'Turn back.' I turned, I passed through I know not what towns and villages; my legs became so swollen I could hardly travel. I abandoned the wheelbarrow. Oh, Mesdemoiselles, I slept at the station in Amiens one night in the height of the bombardment; I slept in other stations; I walked eight days. At the end of that time, I slept a whole day without waking, and when a kind woman told me there was a bed, and would I not like to lie in that, I did not understand her.

"In the Interior, what did I do? I worked in a cotton factory, for the army. One must live. Not one gift did I ever have from any one, not a chemise, not so much as a pin. An ungenerous people, who do not understand! But they think they work hard at their bit of a garden, or vineyard. They have not the heavy labor all the year round of the North.



The North, Mesdemoiselles, is the most interesting part of all France. I have come to travel during the war, and I see it. It has in its five departments the riches of all the rest of France together. But we here have not the easy life they have. One crop succeeds another. You see that the harvest is now finished. Next it will be potatoes and after them the beets. Oh, the beets! the refineries at Moyencourt, at Hombieux, at Ercheu, at Ham! It is a labor to tire both man and beast, that culture. Then too, there is the winter sowing; always the toil and never the time to take a walk for pleasure or see the world!

“Yet, we were well fixed here in Bouverchy, with the Canal du Nord carrying coal from the mines to Paris, and the railroad from Noyon to Nesle.”

A neighbor interrupted for some errand. “She too was taken prisoner,” resumed Mme. Carpentier, “with her daughter. Yet never a day did they work. Why? Simply because the Germans waged a second war in taking the civilians capable of work away from France.

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I used to tell them sometimes—three and a half years they were here—: ‘War is a conflict between soldiers. Ours are at the front to fight you. But we, the civilians in the rear, all we ask is to cultivate our fields and remain in our homes; we are no part of the war.’

“But they considered us just that. They set us to work in *corvées*. And while the harvesters got pay—two and a half francs here and five at Lannoy—my husband, being mayor, got not a sou. It was always, night and day, knock, knock on the door. ‘M. le Maire?’ ‘Make this list.’ ‘Give me this information.’ ‘Post this order.’ The worst was, one never knew what to expect. One woke in the morning with the thought, ‘Oh, that this day was over!’ One went to bed at night wondering, ‘What will happen next?’ Young girls routed out at three o’clock in the morning to cut willows in the marshes, standing in the water up to their knees all day long; requisition this, requisition that, fines, regulation of crops,—that is not war.

“Then, too, we had our own refugees to har-



"WILLOWS IN THE MARSHES"

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bor, and no place to put them, with soldiers billeted everywhere. And not having bread—the Germans never would give us bread,—and had it not been for the Spanish-American Commission\* what would have become of us?—I myself went out and showed them my own garden of beautiful potatoes, and told them it was free to every one.

“Oh, those days! And then, one night, knock, knock; and the prisoners must be collected then, in the middle of the night, and sent, one knew not where. . . . One can recount, one can recount, but only those who have passed through it understand!”

Mme. Carpentier spoke for the civilian refugees, those sheep before the storm, three times driven from their homes. In August, 1914, we see them thus fleeing the approach of the enemy, leaving their cattle in the fields, their harvests in the barns, taking the road with thousands like them, farther, always farther, toward the south. We see them, left behind by the retreat of the English and the French,

\*The Belgian Relief Commission.

bewildered, halted by the advancing enemy, and finally turning north again through the German lines. We see them, in 1916, huddled in the mud and rain, in the courtyard of the Château of Ham—that dungeon which looked down on the betrayal of Jeanne d'Arc—awaiting the first shipment of civilian prisoners to Germany. We see them in 1917 suffering a wholesale deportation—from Esmery-Hallon alone went on that winter night 420 persons—and in March the remnant driven from their burning homes. We see them again a year later, in the saddest, most hopeless of exiles, dispersed family from family among strangers none too eager to receive them in the interior.

But what of the civilian prisoners themselves? From our villages, 1,800 of these were taken. Some, like the mayor of Buvérchy, spent their days in Belgium or in Northern France, a manufacturing country, without tilled gardens. They ate fodder beets, leaves, potato tops, anything to keep alive, and many died. Others were detailed to the German army itself, and made trenches, em-

## The Village and the Future 209

placements, or roads for the artillery. They came back, many of them, with the German army, to their own villages in the spring of 1918. Twenty-five thus saw the ruins of Hombleux, from a German prison camp and worked in her streets. One boy of Canisy was just across the river in Ham, and watched the bombardment of his village while he laid tracks for the guns. Meantime, his mother, his lame father and his sisters, together with thirty of his neighbors, were starving for three days in the cellars there, and were then sent north by the victors, prisoners too.

Refugees, civilian prisoners, there is still one other class of exiles to chronicle, the soldiers with the colors. Six hundred of them marched away to the sound of the drum and the ringing of bells in the summer of 1914. One hundred and fifty fell for France on the field of honor and ten died in German prison camps. For three and a half years, these men fought without news of their families; the majority of them never saw kith or kin until after the Armistice. Ask any one of them now where

he fought, and he will say simply, "Everywhere." But through all their campaigns, on the Marne, in Champagne, along the Yser, in the Somme itself, there sounds like a thunder, Verdun. Yes, our men were there; thirty-two months, said one, in the artillery, and another decorated for bravery at the recapture of Fort Vaux. Yes, as Mme. Carpentier said: One can recount, one can recount, but only one who has been on the hills of that Golgotha, that Place of Skulls and of Calvaries unnumbered, can understand.

How did the families of this dispersion find one another, and why did they come back? In some cases through the records of the refugee bureaus at the gateways of the frontiers, in some by watching day after day at crossroads, in some by chance, in some by the coöperation of German captors, the scattered families assembled. But not all. Our villages mourn one hundred dead during the evacuations, and fifty who have disappeared.

They came back by instinct, by habit, to their plains. "Ah, the Somme! the love of



## The Village and the Future 211

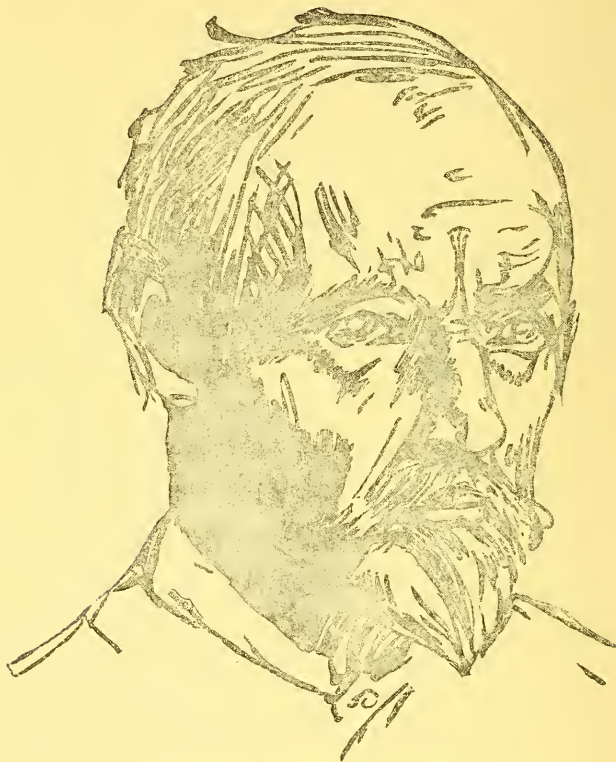
the morsel of soil one possesses, where one has always lived, that is the most tenacious thing in these poor, dislodged souls. Even when they know that their home no longer exists, that of their village there remains nothing but a hideous upheaval, they still hope to collect some of the fragments, to reconstruct in better fashion; in fine, to recover their land where bit by bit, they will piece together again the memories which are the fragments of their lives.”\*

And with the help of the men, of German prisoners—of whom last summer there were forty-odd thousand working in the Somme—they are rebuilding the ruins, reëstablishing the economic life. A month after the Armistice, sixty souls were already living in our villages. As new arrivals met in the streets, they kissed one another with the salutation, “Bon Courage!” That was in the winter, in the first shock of the devastation. But the words echo down all the months.

Courage! Said the oldest inhabitant of Sancourt, a man of over eighty, last summer: “I

\* René Benjamin: *Les Rapatriés*, p. 57.

wish I were younger, perhaps forty, so that I could take part in this rebuilding of the



"I WISH I WERE YOUNGER"

land, and see it done. But to each his turn." Said the Préfet of the Department in ad-

## The Village and the Future 213

dress a congress of the mayors of all the communes, about that same date: "Gentlemen, take courage, have patience. . . . Firmness of purpose and tenacity of action are the virtues which the sons of Picardy should have from their inherited soil, which gives not up its secrets save to those who wrest them away with desperate toil.

"Your clear valleys shall regain the calm and the freshness of other days; your plains, appeased, liberated, shall take pride in their riches, and your houses, rejuvenated, shall shelter the laughter of your children, of whom your sufferings will have been the ransom.

"And on that day there shall remain no other trace of the passing of war through the land of Picardy than the honor, the imperishable honor, of having paid by its unmerited wounds, the price of the salvation of France."

That day is far in the future. But among the ruins, the tapestry of life is being rewoven to-day in colors as lovely as those that adorned once in this same Picardy, the Field of the Cloth of Gold. It is a hot day in summer; the

light is strong on the naked walls of Ham; dust powders the trees that still cast a shade along the esplanade by the canal; dust swirls from the clanging engines that carry away the débris. But suddenly, through the clangor, one is aware of laughter, of a cadence hummed, and of feet keeping time to it. A bridal procession is coming down the street! Behold the groom in soldier blue, and the bride in her fair white veil; behold the troupe that marches happily behind them, behold youth and happiness and love reborn.

Another pageant, on another day, a windy Sunday in September, winds through these same streets. It is the children of a dozen communes, marching to their confirmation, the girls in bridal veils, the boys crowned with white chaplets, a hundred and sixty of them. Our children are there, our villagers are there, banking in the flowing stream with somber borders of black; for, as M. le Curé says, "We all bear in our heart, is it not true? a gaping wound from the war." On up the street winds the procession, singing shrilly, following the

## The Village and the Future 215

one splash of gorgeous color, the crimson-belled miter of the Bishop of Amiens. To the ruined church of Notre Dame they march,



"FOLLOWING THE BISHOP OF AMIENS"

and up the steps. The Bishop paused and turned to the crowd in the street. His jeweled crozier towered above the golden miter, a gold embroidered stole flanked his rich vestments, his face was worthy of its splendid setting.

He spoke, quite simply, of the usage of patience, of toil, of regularity, of law. He entered, and the crowd entered after him. Overhead was the vaulted sky, for organ, the wind and the rain. But in the choir, like a panel of Bellini, sat in state the Bishop, and his canon in ermine, and M. le Curé, gray-haired, his black cap on his knee.

## CHAPTER XV

### “THE FRUIT OF THE TREE OF WAR”

THERE are many ways of measuring what the Smith College Relief Unit in the Somme has accomplished. There is the way of statistics, of the number of dollars raised and expended, of the personnel engaged throughout two years and a half upon civilian relief, of the number and kinds of articles distributed during that time. Such compilations may be found in treasurers' reports, or in monthly statements. There is the way of audits, official endorsements, citations. These also are in the Unit archives and have already become a heritage to the College. But there is another way in which to test the success of the Smith College Unit. Mrs. Harriet Boyd Hawes, in her message to the alumnæ before she sailed, said:

“To make the French glad we came, that



is what we must work for. The most efficient charity organization is a failure if it cannot qualify by this test. And when people tell me they do not approve of our going as a unit, since they can see good only in centralized effort, I think, 'Ask the French'; ask them whether they prefer to be helped by a central bureau, or whether they like the personal touch of friends living with them, learning first-hand their needs, doctoring their ailments, sharing with them and making their heroism known to a world eager to show homage to it in gifts. Ask the French, and we of the Smith Unit will accept their decision."

It needs only one testimony of many to prove the answer, that of M. Lemaire, Mayor of Grécourt. Three years a prisoner, having been taken to Belgium as hostage for his village, he heard when he came back through Amiens in 1918, that he need have had no anxiety about his family, "for," said the official in charge of refugee records, "a committee of Dames Américaines has been looking out for them." This summer, M. Lemaire's eldest

## “The Fruit of the Tree of War” 219

daughter, Giselle, made her first communion. Her father and mother invited the Unit to coffee after the service. The family are living in two patched-up shacks and a semi-cylindrical Nissen hut in the courtyard of their old farm. In the hut, they had set a table, where places were laid for them and for us. Giselle, looking like some medieval saint, her eyes hollowed with fasting, sat at the head, her father at the foot. Her mother, her aunt, her little sister, and an apple-cheeked old lady in a white cap, “who was the first person to dress Giselle at her birth,” and we, completed the circle. White wine, four different sorts of small cakes, a baked custard, and coffee commemorated what M. Lemaire, referring to his own communion, called “the happiest day of my life.” His greatest fear during his years of exile had been lest he should not be released in time to see Giselle’s. And when at last, with healths and congratulations, the party was over, he rose and made a little speech, explaining that we had been asked because they considered us their family for all we had done

for Grécourt. "We only wish," he said, "that we might better express our gratitude."

But it is we as a Unit, we as representatives of Smith College, who should with more reason express our gratitude for what Grécourt has done for us. In that imponderable debt, there need figure no lack in transportation, no non-existence of supplies, no lagging of material fact behind the ideal plan. The only limitations to that high experience were the limits of comprehension, of endeavor, of fellowship, set by our own personalities. Such failures, our College, eager to honor us, will fortunately overlook. There remains to us as individuals and as a Unit, a priceless memory of spiritual horizons limitless as the sky of stars and moon and sunsets above our spacious plains.

Would that we, who were sent by you "for a dream's sake," O Alma Mater, might bring you back from those fields of glory, a tithe of what is your own! And yet, here again, who shall measure for the College the force of this our tradition of the Great War? In 1917, Dean Comstock bade the Unit the gracious

## “The Fruit of the Tree of War” 221

Godspeed: “In thinking of the various influences which will affect the tone of our next college year, I can find none upon which we can rely more surely for an inspiration to steady, cheerful work, to right feeling, to sane, intelligent thinking than the unseen presence of the members of our Unit. Never in their busiest undergraduate days, never in their later successes, will they have been more truly and vitally and helpfully present in Northampton than during their days in France.”

It was through its sponsor, the Alumnæ Association, that the Unit became a nucleus, behind which stood Smith College, “a Unit too.” The home organization in its early days was very simple. The first circular sent to the alumnæ on behalf of the Unit mentions as officers only the Director of the Unit and the Secretary and Treasurer. It was not until Commencement, 1917, that the alumnæ body formally assumed the responsibility of the Unit, and appointed a Committee of six members of which Mrs. Helen Rand Thayer

was chairman. In addition to the Committee, there was a shipping agent, also an alumna, in New York, and a publicity department ready made in the Alumnae Secretary and the *Alumnae Quarterly* in Northampton. Throughout the United States, the forty-two Smith Clubs, linking from coast to coast, became centers in their turn of publicity, and furnished the sinews of war. Loyal alumnae of Japan and the Philippines were eager to contribute. In these clubs, thousands of garments were made and stockings knitted, first for the Unit, and later for the pooled supplies of the Red Cross.

On the other side of the ocean, in Paris, the central Committee had also its delegated committee, of which Mrs. Harriet Bliss Ford was the chairman, so that the Unit was not cut off from its source of inspiration and of authority. It shared the heavy responsibilities of decision, and benefited by the counsel of one peculiarly fitted, by her position in the American Red Cross, her knowledge of French policies, and

## “The Fruit of the Tree of War” 223

her standing with the alumnæ at home, to advise.

In the College itself, the undergraduates were quickly drawn into the circle of fellowship. In October, 1917, the Committee organized the first, but by no means the last, rally for the Unit. The undergraduates expressed their gratitude by an immediate pledge of \$4,641. That refreshing pamphlet, “War Activities of Smith College,” issued by the Student War Board in June, 1919, narrates that “many a Freshman at Christmas time displayed a ringless finger and told a bewildered family that ‘we sent the money instead to the Unit,’ ” and that “on November 7, 1917, we proudly hung from College Hall a service flag for the Unit, containing seventeen stars.”

From that time until June, 1918, the war activities of the College, centering about the S. C. R. U., as the Smith College Relief Unit is fondly nicknamed, grew. The original Committee expanded into a War Service



Board of thirteen members and appropriate sub-committees. Through the Smith Clubs, an organized drive for money apportioned by quota, was successfully carried out, not only for the original Unit, but for the Smith College Canteen Unit, the Smith College Refugee



MENHIR, EPPEVILLE

Unit, and the Smith College Near East Unit. The service flag blazoned in all two hundred and ninety-six names.

For the patriotism of the College overflowed the bounds of its own special Units and Committees. From the days when its alumnæ founded the College Settlement in New York



## “The Fruit of the Tree of War” 225

until now, Smith has stirred with a pioneer spirit for social service. And the Unit, in the eyes of its founders, was never conceived as an end in itself. Before it was even indorsed by the alumnæ, it had sent out two representatives “to present the plan to other women’s colleges.” “We hope,” states the first circular, “that other women’s colleges will form similar units and that eventually a service will grow up as useful in its way as the American Ambulance Service, as creditable to our country and as valuable in tradition to our colleges.”

Out of this hope emerged two movements, the Association of Intercollegiate Alumnæ closely affiliated with the War Service Board of Smith, which recommended two hundred and thirteen college graduates for posts with the American Red Cross, and the Young Men’s Christian Association; and the score of units from women’s colleges which went to France under the American Red Cross. Among those units with which Smith College was privileged to advise were the Barnard

Unit, the Vassar Unit, the Goucher College Unit, the Leland Stanford Unit, and the Wellesley Unit. It is true that the exigencies of war dispersed the personnel of these units abroad until after the Armistice. But they were fulcrums of enthusiasm and of support in each of their several colleges, and as such of value not only to the colleges but to the Red Cross which approved them.

After the Armistice, three of the Units began, where we too began over again, the rehabilitation of allotted territories under the French Government, independent of the American Red Cross. In point of time, we were again the pioneers. But we were closely followed by the Barnard Unit of five members, which went as a direct representative of the Ministry of the Liberated Regions, to Marcoing and its group of destroyed villages about Cambrai on the Hindenburg Line. The third was the Vassar Unit, which merged itself with a French committee charged with the care of the returning refugees of Verdun. The fourth and youngest was the Wellesley Unit



THE PET MAGPIE

at Lucy-en-Bocage, on the hills above Château-Thierry, Hill 204 and Vaux.

In Esmerly-Hallon there is a garden where in the summers before the war five hundred roses bloomed. Of the house, formerly embowered in vines, only jagged walls and the frames of windows and doors remain. But the window ledges are set with brass shell cases, polished and filled with flowering plants, and the garden, seen through the apertures, glows with scent and color. They are not roses, those gorgeous flowers, but stately dahlias and delicate petunias. The rose bushes, newly grafted, will bloom in years to come a thousand fold. But they will share the glory of that garden with those later comers, whose seeds the war has wafted thither with returning refugees from the gardens of Carcassonne.

Again, for the seed which we have scattered, how shall one calculate the harvest? A few months, and the Units themselves will be nothing but names in the little communities they have lived among. In one way or an-

## “The Fruit of the Tree of War” 229

other, their work will be given over to those who can best carry it on, the French. But each community assures us that those names will be handed down to future generations, to be to them also an heirloom and a tradition. Such, no less than destruction, are the imperishable fruits of the Tree of War.

This we know, that whatever traditions gather about the Smith College Relief Unit, here or there, they will be derived from the spiritual heritage bequeathed by Sophia Smith to the College of which it is an offshoot. As her adviser, John M. Green, interpreted her trust, “It was usefulness, happiness and honor that the College was to furnish to women.” It was to be “a developing instrument designed to enable women more effectively and freely to assume their share in the decisive affairs of an ever-changing world.”



## APPENDIX





MAP SHOWING DEVASTATED AREA. THE BLACK LINE INDICATES  
LIMIT OF GERMAN ADVANCE

## APPENDIX

### PERSONNEL OF THE SMITH COLLEGE RELIEF UNIT

1917-1920

#### *Directors:*

Harriet Boyd Hawes  
Alice Weld Tallant  
Hannah Dunlop Andrews  
Marie Léonie Wolfs  
Anne M. Chapin

#### *Original Unit:*

Margaret Ashley, 1914  
Marion Bennett, 1906  
Elizabeth H. Bliss, 1908  
Marjorie Leigh Carr, 1909  
Anne M. Chapin, 1904  
Elizabeth M. Dana, 1904  
Ruth Gaines, 1901  
Harriet Boyd Hawes, 1892  
Catherine B. Hooper, 1911  
Ruth Joslin, 1912  
Maud Kelly  
Alice E. Leavens, 1903  
Millicent V. Lewis, 1907  
Lucy O. Mather, Ex-1888  
Alice Weld Tallant, 1897  
Frances W. Valentine, 1902  
Marie L. Wolfs, 1908  
Margaret G. Wood, 1912  
Mrs. Roberta Cummings, housekeeper  
Mrs. Hannah D. Andrews, 1904, buyer

#### *Replacements:*

Dorothy S. Ainsworth, 1918  
Hannah D. Andrews, 1904  
Ida B. Andrus, 1910  
Ruth Hill Arnold, 1897  
Elizabeth Biddlecome, 1904  
Dorothy H. Brown, 1913  
Mary A. Clapp, 1912  
Fannie F. Clement, 1903

Ellen T. Emerson, 1901  
 Alice Evans, 1905  
 Harriet Bliss Ford, 1899  
 Mabel Grandin, 1909  
 Rosamund Grant, 1913  
 Clara M. Greenough, 1884  
 Sarah B. Hackett, 1909  
 Isabel La Monte, 1913  
 Evelyn L. Lawrence, 1917  
 Alice M. Ober, 1906  
 Georgia Willis Read, Ex-1908  
 Anna P. Rochester, 1911  
 Anna A. Ryan, 1902  
 Mary G. Stevenson, 1909  
 A. Louise Studebaker, 1908  
 Marjorie Talbot, 1910  
 Marion Thomas, 1910  
 Edna M. True, 1909  
 Dorothy A. Young, 1902

*Non-Alumnae Members:*

Yvonne Bouffard  
 Anna M. Gove  
 Edith Griffin  
 De Lan Kinney  
 Marguerite Lavignot

MEMBERS OF THE SMITH COLLEGE RELIEF UNIT COMMITTEE FORMED IN JUNE, 1917

Mrs. Helen R. Thayer, Chairman  
 Mrs. Alice Wellington Lyman  
 Mrs. Alice T. L. Parsons  
 Mrs. Elizabeth C. Morrow  
 Miss Ellen T. Emerson  
 Mrs. Harriet B. Hawes  
 Mrs. Blanche W. Williams  
 Miss Mary B. Lewis  
 Miss Louisa K. Fast

In June, 1918, this committee was succeeded by the Smith College War Service Board, of which the following persons have been members:

Miss Mary B. Lewis, Chairman, June, 1918, to October, 1919  
 Miss Ellen T. Emerson, Chairman, October, 1919—  
 Pres. William A. Neilson  
 Miss Ada L. Comstock

Mrs. Elizabeth C. Morrow  
 Mrs. Alice T. L. Parsons  
 Mrs. Helen R. Thayer  
 Miss Florence H. Snow  
 Mrs. Jean J. Goddard  
 Mrs. Ethel W. Cone  
 Miss Martha Wilson  
 Miss Louisa K. Fast  
 Miss Dorothy Douglas  
 Miss Anne M. Paul  
 Mrs. Hannah D. Andrews  
 Miss Marie L. Wolfs  
 Miss Margaret Hitchcock  
 Miss Elizabeth Wyandt

## FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Between June 1, 1917, and April 1, 1920, the Smith College Relief Unit Committee and its successor the Smith College War Service Board, have received in the form of general donations, and special gifts, interest, etc., \$241,284.17.

The summary of their expenditures in connection with the work of the Smith College Relief Unit from June 1, 1917, to April 1, 1920, follows:

Committee Expense.....	\$173.40	
Treasurer's Salary.....	1,032.40	
Treasury's Expense.....	735.37	
Publicity.....	974.37	
Songs.....	8.00	
Office Expense.....	745.96	
Exchange and Protest Fees.....	8.39	
Auditor.....	161.87	
Postage, Printing, Office Supplies.....	1,179.71	
Cables, Telephone and Telegraph.....	974.32	
Express, Insurance and Freight.....	952.04	
	<hr/>	\$6,945.83
Smith College Relief Unit		
Supplies to France.....	\$4,178.21	
Expenses.....	2,643.76	
Outfits.....	616.93	
Drafts sent.....	53,774.90	
Money cabled.....	133,200.00	
Autos, Bicycles, Storage, etc.....	7,189.62	
	<hr/>	\$201,603.42
Salary Worker for Boy Scouts in France.....		1,866.67
		<hr/>
Total.....		\$210,415.92

It should be noted that the War Service Board has maintained other Units with the Y.M.C.A. in France and under the Committee for Relief in the Near East, etc., so that the expenditures here given are only those connected with the Smith College Relief Unit.

A sample monthly report of the Treasurer of the Unit, which is appended, gives an idea of the receipts and expenses of the Unit. Aside from the ordinary expenditures for the regular work of the Unit, during the year 1919-1920, two scholarships for nurses were given to Dr. Hamilton's School of Nursing in Bordeaux, to enable the nurses to take the full course in that school. At the same time two scholarships were given to Pro Gallia, the Social Service School in Paris, to enable two pupils of that school to take their full course of two years.

When the Smith College Relief Unit finishes its work in France, and turns its Hombieux plant over to the Secours d'Urgence, a subsidy, sufficient to carry on that post for some time, will be made to that organization. It is our expectation that from the balance which the Smith College Relief Unit has in its Treasury a permanent fund will be created which will be sufficient to provide four scholarships similar to those described above for the benefit of French women, and that certain hospitals in the Somme will receive gifts to enable them to make much needed repairs, and to purchase necessary equipment for the continuance of their work.

(Signed) ELLEN T. EMERSON,  
Chairman War Service Board.

April 21, 1920.

### SMITH COLLEGE RELIEF UNIT FINANCIAL STATEMENT FOR JUNE, 1919

#### RECEIPTS

June 1	Cash balance.....	14,925.15
	Bank balance, Morgan, Harjes, Treas. Acct.....	251,712.15
	Bank balance, E. Biddlecome acct.....	22,935.85

#### Cash Intake

	Farm sales.....	54,720.35
	Furniture sales.....	3,638.00
	Store sales.....	23,437.25
	Motor refunds.....	512.25
	Publicity refunds...	10.00
	Living refunds.....	3.50

		82,321.35
Gifts.....		793.55

War Service Board Remittance.....	159,968.00
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532,656.05

## EXPENSES

Farm (Live stock, feed, tools, etc.).....	52,244.70	
Relief.....	3,416.75	
Supplies and equipment.....	1,157.35	
Store (Dry goods and kitchen furnishings).....	15,684.90	
Medical department.....	3,093.15	
Motor department.....	1,881.55	
Living.....	4,092.20	
Travel.....	270.95	
Miscellaneous.....	290.00	
Publicity and entertainment	21.60	
Library.....	1,086.85	
	<hr/>	83,240.00
July 1 Balance, Morgan, Harjes, Treas.		
Acct.....	416,992.85	
Balance, E. Biddlecome acct....	4,024.00	
Cash balance.....	28,399.20	
	<hr/>	532,656.05

(Signed) ELLEN T. EMERSON,  
Treasurer, Smith College Relief Unit

### CONDENSED REPORT OF THE SMITH COLLEGE RELIEF UNIT FOR JUNE, 1919

REPORT OF THE DOCTOR	Total
Dispensary visits in 11 villages.....	190
House visits.....	96
	<hr/>
New patients.....	93
Old patients.....	41
	<hr/>
	134
REPORT OF NURSE	
Total cases for the month.....	27
Total discharged.....	11
Sent elsewhere for various reasons.....	11
Visits during the month.....	140
Treatments at the dispensary.....	18
Visits to the dispensary.....	44
Clinics.....	5
Visits to the schools.....	2
Inspection of the children in the schools.....	41

Five children have been taken to Blérancourt for operations on the throat by the "American Women's Hospital." Eight more will be taken tomorrow, and we shall continue our care of them in the hospital.

We have now a French nurse whom we are initiating into our work and whom we shall leave to replace us.

#### ESMERY-HALLON INSPECTION between May 8 and June 21, 1919

Number of children under 3.....	3
Children between 3 and 15.....	60
Adults, 70 and over.....	27
Families.....	96
Population.....	418
Number of families occupying baraqucs.....	7
ruins.....	89
Average number of persons occupying each room....	2.1
Wells with drinkable water.....	27
Wells cleaned.....	23
Wells not cleaned.....	42
Wells used by a single family.....	9
Wells used by 87 families.....	18
Number of families with privies.....	51
without privies.....	45
without wells or privies.....	29

#### FARM SERVICE. REPORT OF SALES FOR JUNE

Cows.....	20	
Hens and chickens..	1,071	
Rabbits.....	324	
Ducks.....	337	Nearly 50 quarts of milk are
Geese.....	276	sold each day.
Fertile eggs.....	359	
Pigs.....	31	
Turkeys.....	6	
Tools.....	260	

#### STORE REPORT FOR JUNE

Total sales for June, 24,112.75 francs

As all the inhabitants are furnished with the necessities the wholesale price is charged on purchases.

#### LIBRARY

The library bearing the name of "Elizabeth Russell," has now 700 books. There are two tiers of fiction or history and another tier has books on hygiene, travel, agriculture, science.

About 200 books are in circulation, mostly among the children. We have only just received books for adults and have loaned to those who have asked for them. We are continuing the purchase of books in spite of the difficulties of getting them.

#### REPORT OF THE CHILDREN

The end we have in view with the children is first to interest them, but we employ different methods for their physical and moral de-



velopment. We meet difficulties because of the differences of age, which prevent the making of groups.

The villages are divided into two categories:

(1) Those in which there are schools.

(2) Those in which there are no schools.

In the villages where there are schools we have classes in gymnastics given during school hours. In other villages we have classes in sewing and knitting. The classes are followed by games and exercises.

On June 15 we had a party for the children, 160 taking part. After the different games and refreshments, they went to Vespers at the church in Grécourt.

#### REPORT OF THE CLASSES IN GYMNASICS

Total classes in the 3 villages with schools.....	39
children.....	110
Total classes in the 9 villages without schools.....	35
children.....	120

#### REPORT OF VISITS TO INDIVIDUALS AND GIFTS

93 visits have been made in the various villages and the following articles have been given:

	Total
Stoves.....	20
Tables.....	4
Mattresses.....	27
Beds.....	5
Single beds.....	4
Chairs.....	8
Coverings.....	2
—	71 articles

#### LETTER FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR COMMENDING THE UNIT'S WORK

##### RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE

Ministère de l'Intérieur  
S.R.R.E.

Nesle, le 4 Novembre 1917.

Le Délégué au Contrôle de la Réorganisation  
des Régions Libérées,  
à Madame la Directrice  
au SMITH COLLEGE, à GRÉCOURT.

Madame:

J'ai l'honneur de vous accuser réception du rapport si intéressant et si complet que vous avez bien voulu m'adresser sur l'œuvre accomplie par vous et vos collaboratrices depuis votre arrivée à Grécourt.

Je vous remercie bien vivement, et permettez-moi de vous féliciter, pour les soins que vous prodiguez avec tant de générosité aux malheureux habitants d'une région si terriblement éprouvée.

Votre programme de travaux est parfaitement établi et, en particulier, vos efforts pour les enfants méritent une approbation spéciale. Si vous voulez bien continuer à me tenir au courant de votre action, vous faciliterez l'organisation d'une indispensable coordination des secours que je voudrais rendre réellement effective ici. Croyez que de mon côté je ferai tout ce qui est en mon pouvoir pour faciliter votre développement, pour le plus grand bien de nos compatriotes victimes de la barbarie allemande.

Veuillez agréer, Madame, l'assurance de ma considération la plus distinguée.

G. QUELLIEN.

#### LETTER FROM THE MILITARY COMMANDER OF THE DISTRICT COMMENDING THE UNIT'S WORK

Ct.  
Major de Secteur  
Oise Nord

Miss Tallant, Dr. en médecine  
Château de Robécourt  
à Grécourt.  
Mademoiselle,

20-12-17.

Je ne peux pas quitter le commandement de mon secteur des pays réoccupés sans vous exprimer les sentiments de profonde admiration en même temps que de très vive gratitude que m'inspirent les inappréciables services que vous rendez depuis bientôt six mois, vous Miss Kelly, vos infirmières et toutes vos compagnes de Smith College, à la malheureuse population des pays dévastés par les Huns . . .

Sans vous et celles qui vous secondent si bien, les nombreux malades d'une population composée uniquement d'êtres faibles, femmes, vieillards, enfants (puisque les hommes sont soldats ou bien emmenés en captivité par l'ennemi) seraient abandonnés presque sans secours. En effet nos ressources de toutes sortes sont forcément insuffisantes devant l'immensité de la tâche, tout spécialement au point de vue médical. . . .

Veuillez bien agréer, Mademoiselle, l'assurance que je considère comme un honneur aussi bien que comme une très vive satisfaction l'occasion qui m'est donnée de manifester hautement l'estime profonde et l'admiration sans réserve que je professe pour vous et pour les nobles femmes venues des Etats-Unis avec vous au secours des Français victimes du Boche.

Votre très respectueux et dévoué,  
(Signed) A. MONIN.

## CITATION

*Médaille d'Argent de la "Reconnaissance Française"*

Smith College relief unit, société américaine: cette formation s'est occupée, depuis l'automne 1917, à soulanger les populations civiles éprouvées. A apporté une aide morale et matérielle précieuse aux habitants des régions de la Somme libérées après la retraite allemande de mars 1917. Au cours de la retraite de l'armée britannique, en mars 1918, a apporté à la mission française et à l'armée britannique un concours inestimable pour l'évacuation de la population civile. Les infirmières américaines de cette formation conduisant des petites voitures sanitaires automobiles ont parcouru inlassablement, jour et nuit, les localités à évacuer sans souci du danger, ni de la fatigue, allant chercher des habitants jusque dans les régions bombardés et faisant preuve en maintes circonstances de calme et de bravoure.

Mlle. Valentine, de nationalité américaine, membre de la Croix Rouge américaine de New York: a aidé, sous le bombardement, durant l'offensive de mars et avril 1918, à l'évacuation des malades, des vieillards et des enfants et à l'établissement de cantines et dortoirs sur le front de Montdidier, Poix et Beauvais. A déjà près de trois ans de service et s'occupe actuellement du ravitaillement de trente villages.

Mlle. Wolfs, de nationalité américaine, membre de la Croix Rouge américaine de New York: a aidé sous le bombardement, durant l'offensive de mars et avril 1918, à l'évacuation des malades, des vieillards et des enfants et à l'établissement de cantines et dortoirs sur le front de Montdidier, Poix et Beauvais. A déjà près de trois ans de service et s'occupe actuellement du ravitaillement de trente villages.

*Journal Officiel du 7 Fév. 1920.*

## School of Hombleux,

Mademoiselle the Directress, and Ladies:

The first day of the year, in France, is the day on which one presents his good wishes to all whom he loves.

So we, the little pupils of the boys' school of Hombleux, would be remiss in our duty if we did not come on this occasion to present ours for the year which has begun.

We offer to you the most ardent wishes we can make. We hope that this year of 1920 will smile upon you and give you all the happiness which you deserve.

We shall never forget that we owe you most grateful appreciation for all that you have done for us. We are poor, we possess nothing that we could offer you in remembrance of this New Year's Day. However, our teacher has told us that we have our hearts with which to love and bless you. These hearts we offer you; they will be the best token of our gratitude.

When you return to your noble country, the void caused by your departure will be great for us, but in spite of the distance, be sure that we shall never forget "the good American ladies of Grécourt."

Please accept, Mademoiselle the Directress, and Ladies, the assurance of our most respectful regard.

For the pupils of the Boys' School of Hombleux.

The first in the class,

LUCIEN BAILLET.

COMMUNE OF SANCOURT  
COMPARATIVE STATISTICAL SURVEY

	1914	1919
Number of houses . . . .	123	2 in bad condition
Population . . . . .	Men . . . 129 Women 142 Children 82 Total 353	Men . . . 63 Women . 64 Children 27 Total 154
Farmers . . . . .	16	11
Farm hands . . . . .	230	120
Grocers . . . . .	4	2
Farriers . . . . .	1	1
Wheelwrights . . . . .	1	1
Harness makers . . . . .	1	0
Contractors . . . . .	1	0
Masons . . . . .	1	1
Dressmakers . . . . .	2	1
Factories . . . . .	0	0
Stores . . . . .	0	0
Various industries . . . .	0	0
Number of farms . . . .	16	11 indifferently equipped
Number of hectares cultivated . . . .	632	120
Number of vegetable gardens . . . . .	117	48
Value . . . . .	35,100 francs	23,800 francs
Number of orchards . . .	8	8
Value . . . . .	3,000 francs	4,000 francs
Wheat, area . . . . .	214 hectares	8 hectares
Value . . . . .	218,280 francs	24,000 francs
Oats, area . . . . .	190 hectares	23 hectares
Value . . . . .	190,000 francs	69,000 francs
Sugar beets, area . . . .	147 hectares	0
Value . . . . .	205,800 francs	0
Alfalfa, area . . . . .	48 hectares	10 hectares
Value . . . . .	28,800 francs	seed for crops in 1920
Clover, area . . . . .	16 hectares	5
Value . . . . .	9,600 francs	seed for crops in 1920
Potatoes, area . . . . .	12 hectares	4 hectares
Value . . . . .	18,000 francs	20,000 francs

## COMMUNE OF SANCOURT

COMPARATIVE STATISTICAL SURVEY—*Cont.*

	1914			1919		
	Num- ber	Value	Total Value	Num- ber	Value	Total Value
<b>Live Stock</b>						
Horses.....	130	1200f.	156,000f.	47	2500f.	117,500f.
Oxen.....	20	800	16,000	0	0	0
Cows.....	160	600	96,000	38	2000	76,000
Donkeys.....	3	150	450	0	0	0
Pigs.....	40	150	6,000	4	400	1,600
Sheep.....	500	50	25,000	112	200	22,400
Goats.....	6	30	180	10	125	1,250
Rabbits.....	400	3	1,200	100	15	1,500
Poultry of all kinds, including pigeons	700	3	2,100	80	15	1,200
<b>Farm Equipment</b>						
Wagons.....	11	1000	11,000	0	0	0
Wains.....	20	500	10,000	10	1600	16,000
Carts.....	27	500	13,500	10	1500	15,000
Carriages.....	16	800	12,800	7	2000	14,000
Harvesters.....	15	900	13,500	3	2700	8,100
Mowers.....	15	350	5,250	6	1000	6,000
Rakes.....	15	200	3,000	5	650	3,250
Plows.....	29	300	8,700	10	900	9,000
Rollers.....	20	250	5,000	8	650	5,200
Weeders.....	29	200	5,800	8	600	4,800
Cultivators.....	16	120	1,920	2	400	800
Harrows.....	40	90	3,600	10	270	2,700
Heavy harrows....	8	250	2,000	3	700	2,100
Hay-rakes.....	10	200	2,000	3	600	1,800
Seeders.....	31	500	15,500	5	1700	8,500

The enumeration of these various articles is necessarily very incomplete, since farming equipment comprises a host of objects belonging indoors; separators, pressers, grinders, churns, crushers, choppers, chaff-cutters, pumps, presses, fanning mills, sorters, etc. If the agricultural loss is to be reckoned, there should be added also all the harness. It should be understood that everything was destroyed.

## COMMUNE OF SANCOURT

COMPARATIVE STATISTICAL SURVEY—*Cont.**During the German Occupation*

Number of civil prisoners....	15
Number of soldiers.....	47
Number of women prisoners .	0
Property destroyed or taken:	

All the destruction was done by the Germans after they had carried off a part of the population to the north of France, and the other part to Rouy-le-Petit, near Nesle. During the absence of the inhabitants, the village was burned. Nothing was taken during the occupation, nor destroyed, except the crops.

*During the German Retreat*

Population,	{	Men.....	16
from March, 1917, to March, 1918, 58 persons		Women.....	25
		Children.....	17

Farms cultivated: 5 farmers tried to farm with the aid of the army, and chance assistance, with some implements they recovered.

## Agricultural Material:

Horses.....	10
Oxen.....	0
Cows.....	13
Sheep.....	0
Donkeys.....	0
Pigs.....	0
Rabbits.....	20
Poultry.....	30

*After the Armistice*

Localities where the civilian prisoners were: In Germany and in different places

Localities where the refugees of 1918 were: Part in the north, at Teignier, and part scattered in the unin-  
vaded territory

How many soldiers died on the field of honor?.....	5
How many soldiers died in captivity?.....	0
How many refugees died during the evacuation?.....	12
How many civilian prisoners disappeared?.....	3



## COMMUNE OF EPPEVILLE

(Department of the Somme, Arrondissement of Péronne, Canton of Ham)

*Description.* The commune of Eppeville is divided into three sections; Eppeville (about 150 inhabitants), the hamlet of Verlaines (about 300 inhabitants) and the annex of St. Grégoire (about 550 inhabitants) as one approaches the railroad station of Ham.

Eppeville and Verlaines used to be essentially agricultural. St. Grégoire used to be the industrial section (sugar refinery, electric plant, warehouse covering several acres, oil mill, work shops for the making of agricultural instruments).

The country was rich, the soil very fertile, there were pretty cottages with little gardens; the inhabitants lived at ease.

*The Occupation.* On August 29, 1914, the Germans took possession of the commune. They commenced at once making requisitions; in the warehouses they found six million francs' worth of sugar and molasses.

From August 29, 1914, to March 19, 1917, they occupied Eppeville, compelling the inhabitants to work for them, levying perquisitions and requisitions, sending away to Germany those who displeased them, every day issuing proclamations, giving orders, maltreating the populace.

On July 2, 1916, an alarm! The Germans finding themselves menaced sent into the Department of the North, the men from 15 to 50 years of age. Alas! A month later they sent them back.

*First Departure of the Germans.* On February 10, 1917, they sent away 110 men from 15 to 60 years of age, 22 women and girls, and on March 19, 1917, they made their famous strategic retreat on St. Quentin. But before leaving, they took away or destroyed the movable furniture, evacuated to Ham the inhabitants who remained, burned the houses, cut the fruit trees.

For a year the ruins of the commune were occupied by French soldiers, and then in January, 1918, by English soldiers; about 500 inhabitants had remained. Life there was not gay, carried on always under bombardment by aeroplanes.

*Return of the Germans.* Then, on March 22, 1918, the Germans erupted from St. Quentin, all the population was evacuated in a few hours, the Boches took possession again of Eppeville, and were arrested fifteen kilometers from Amiens.

*Today.* On September 6, 1918, our enemies quitted Eppeville anew, at the victorious push of the Allies, and little by little the inhabitants began to come back to their ruins. Today 600 have returned, lodging in baragues, in cellars, in stables, in shelters which they have constructed themselves.

*The Rôle of America.* During the occupation, from August 29, 1914, to March 19, 1917, the Germans having taken possession of everything, requisitioned horses and cows, penned up the hens, the



population saw itself at the point of lacking the necessities of life. It is then that America sent us food; it was opportune. The inhabitants were rationed; the distribution of provisions was made under the control of the municipality.

*The American Ladies.* In April, 1917, the doctors left our region. The sick were cared for with the greatest devotion by the American doctors installed in the ruins of the Château de Grécourt. They furnished us at the same time the necessary medicines, everything being without charge. After the second departure of the Boches, in September, 1918, we saw again the auto of these good ladies halt before the doors, to lavish upon all the words which comfort, the care which gives health, and the material gifts of all kinds which are indispensable to life.

With all our hearts, we say to them: Thanks.

*The Battles.* Eppeville is situated in the valley of the Somme. There it could not escape skirmishes and artillery combats, as the numerous ammunition dumps testify. The great struggles of the infantry took place on the neighboring heights, and on the surrounding plain. In spite of that, many Germans and many French soldiers are buried in the cemetery and in the fields.

*The Soldiers.* 29 soldiers of Eppeville were killed by the enemy, 25 of the inhabitants died during the evacuations, and several were killed by bombs. How many have contracted the germs of incurable maladies!

*Conclusion.* The Germans, during the occupation, had installed their "Kommandantur" at the town hall. "You must," they said, "obey us; we are the masters of the world. It is you who are staying with us."

They exacted from the inhabitants the most passive obedience, they deported and maltreated a great number of them, and left us, according to their own expression, nothing but our two eyes with which to weep.

DEVILLERS, F., Teacher

Eppeville, September 10, 1919.

Secretary to the Mayor.



Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process.

Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide

Treatment Date: MAY 2007

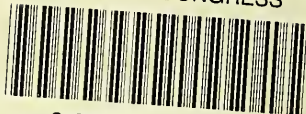
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